

SENSE AND SILENCE
COLLECTED POEMS

1974 – 2009

by

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For the most wonderful source of my creativity and strength, my wife DURGA,

daughter WINNY, and son VIKRAM

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

--Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love*

PREFATORY NOTE

Sense and Silence: Collected Poems: 1974-2009 brings together for the first time all my published collections of poems, including several new ones and/or not yet published old ones. The inclusive dates, 1974-2009, correspond to the dates of composition or first publication of the earliest and latest poems (even if a few poems might have been composed in their revised or pre-revised form as early as 1971). In effect, the poems in this collection, though not chronologically arranged, cover a span of over thirty-five years, reshuffling the past and providing a composite view of my creativity.

Apparently without a pattern, artificially arranged, and untitled, each poem is an experience independent of the rest, and complete in itself, though continuous in spirit. Short and shorter snapshots of daily life, at times unusual but not without depth, it reveals my growth of mind and style. It should also be possible to read each of the sections, viz. *My Silence*, *Music Must Sound*, *Memories Unmemoried*, *Flight of Phoenix*, *I Do Not Question*, *The Face in All Seasons*, and *Sexless Solitude* as a long poem, though the reader is free to re-create the material according to his/her own taste and sensibility.

Some poems, including haiku and tanka, have been dropped or shifted from one section to another to avoid repetition of their appearance. In the experimental haiku and tanka sequences, however, a couple of haiku and tanka might have reappeared.

I continue to believe in giving no titles to my poems (titles tell too much, as Lyle Glazier once observed), and, in fact, I am yet to compose a poem with a title integral to it, even if in some of my earlier publications, especially *Memories Unmemoried*, 'I Do Not Question' in *Two Poets*, 'Some Recent Poems' in *My Silence and Other Selected Poems*, and *Sexless Solitude and Other Poems*, I did suspend some poems by their titles like pictures on the wall. I have now preferred to restore my original design and identify all the poems in each section by numbers. This should not, however, interfere with the readers' freedom of imagination.

Finally, I am indebted to Shri S.K. Jain for reposing his faith in me and readily agreeing to publish my *Collected Poems* to benefit researchers and interested students of contemporary Indian English Poetry both at home and abroad.

--R.K.SINGH

Dhanbad
31 December 2009

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Acknowledgements

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1.

MY SILENCE

1974-1984

1

She is the tree
green and wide
abundantly dressed
overflowing
spreading her sleeves
blesses all
in her cool shade
solitude teems
with breezy songs
I feel
nearer God

2

That autumn tree
from this window
looks like a young woman
naked
exciting birds
to come
kiss and play
tomorrow
when spring will return
she will be too lovely
to touch

3

I feel her hyaline influx
in my deep love leaps
from the soul with subtle glows
her breath runs through my veins:
this vassal of the flesh blushes
as I drink the infinite in her

4

I clasp your hands
and feel the blood
running savagely
through your arteries
in tulip silence

5

Is it the perfume
or your body
that makes the night
drunken?

your lush lips
ripple fire
in beautiful silence

your fragrance radiates
flowers and water

can I seek
my voice
in your breasts?

6

Blind
I see her beauty
deaf
I hear her melody
ignorant
I partake of her knowledge
poor
I share her wealth
in-drawn
her vision reigns my heart

yet the darkness of dust
veils my being
I don't understand
the hidden words

though I sit
under her tree of love
she's still away from me
just one pace
if I could take
I enter
the pavilion of eternity

7

The best poetry
is a woman
concrete, personal, delightful
greater than all

8

What is
this light
without rays
shining
in your eyes?

9

She is declared a mental case
her legs are shackled tight
in the street she snails up and down

naked without food
she freezes in December
near the drain curls up

unnoticed by pavement dwellers
building a bonfire of twigs, papers
cast-off shoes and rags

under the bridge sipping tea
I hear the bell tolling at Rajghat
pilgrims make haste to catch train

10

She stands between two parched trees like a sea of beauty
and looks at passing fishermen in the afternoon
her eyes are fish yet no one cares
the riotous leaves drop down and rest
before the flame cools she sees
against the hilly ups and downs her broken bangles
and hides a weeping rose in her white saree

11

The little heifer eats in
landscape of violence lies
on grass that is a grave

wild beasts and bulls surround

who'll hear her agony when
gods are begotten from their sperms?

12

To express sex
a crowd is convenient in the bus
during the Puja he rubs hard
his cock against the ladies' bottoms
before turning wild gets down
at Sabuj Samaj to search
a new outlet in the Pandal
Durga's eyes are too hazed to see
the dark desires of youth
crowding in the name of religion
puja, culture, and tradition
--all a national wastage—
while the cowards fear the coming
closer of boys and girls
in freedom
the government deploys
criminals actively
pushing and pressing
to keep the law and order, who bothers
their rape and adultery in the crowd?

13

He hands coins
just to look at
the tanned fronts
behind the little holes
of her only saree perhaps
the urge is to tear
the wrap that hides
the little thing but
he's too timid to uncoop
his heart trapped
in her sandal arc

14

While I was petting and necking
lying over her body
she was calculating whether
she could afford a new saree
from what I would pay her
tonight

15

Spring's full youth
he unbuttons
her printed skirt
on red cushion
feels autumn
dropping down
the leaves of year
at the centre incline
like a twisted stem
at the end
wind dries up
a few more prints

16

Squatted in sun
she was cleaning
white and yellow germs
festering her womb
still she thanked
she was alive

17

She mysteriously conceals
all her passions
looking straight pretends
she hasn't seen me

18

In the forest of her body
and steeps of her breasts
is the highwayman
I saw escaping
the moon
over stream last night

19

Each night in the island
of my little bed I enter
sensing sex like octopus
squeeze her with all my fingers

to bridge the gap
between dream and vision
set sail, and shipwrecked
unfree the tensions

in monsoony mist
search door in the wall or
gather diaspora of continents
in a hidden landscape

as a wild mystic explore
her privates with handgun
and land on fresh islands
each night in my little bed

20

When I asked
to open her secret
she showed me thumb

I thought
she would return
love for love

21

Looking like reality this life
is nothing but show
don't fall in its traps

22

Sometimes in winter
in the snow of your body
there simmered a heat

in a vivacious spring
fell a sweet calamity
as love began to jell

don't you remember
my dream's river stirred
and the nemesis in summer?

wedged between me and you
was jinx that rains
to remind of age and passion

the growing jungles and the blues
empaling warmth and vigour
an end we always detest

23

The rising smoke
is mysterious
like woman:
I see
the shade
of a snake

24

Like an autumn tree
curving, leaning
waving, drooping
nude, mysterious
bites into consciousness
through dark odyssey
her love-hate is
the primal snake

25

Every sleeping guy
gets up
at the last kick
of a waking tart

26

Melting chrysanthemum
silent chromosomes
restless energy
stones in wood
where is the release?

27

Swelled by humidity
the mountain is a green cemetery
hiding men and ages
people may not believe in the valley
everyone is walking I hear
death echoing in tunnels
dark or grey, black or green
itching like a whore
whose hand has clutched everything
every song is a lament
conspiring with rains, winter, summer
autumn, storm, wind, sun, moon
it's hardened , cruel, a green stone
nourishing the dirge
we crown death

28

The limy layers on their faces
and the fidgeting fingers in ashes
not far from the kitchen yard
they pick out the used up coal
to burn against their poverty
cook tomorrow's food

29

I sweat my hours in the burrows
dust clouds the still days

roasting their calligraphy
I burn in the deadly gorge

what if the stains pursue
I drink sulphur on the road

30

Banares
seems holier at night
mating dogs and bitches
join pundits
in the name of religion
their meditation
adds noise
no one will admit
I am no god
if it doesn't nettle
the divine rest
it kills my peace

31

The river flows through woods
in Banares for centuries
down this terrace
washes ills and hides sins
in her ripples reflects
the eternity they love
the myth of heaven and salvation
each morning my father repeats
celestial history while his son
breaks off the golden bough
and acts Rex Nemorensis
without fighting the priest

32

Policemen roam about the roads
at night goblins terrify
the poor cart-driver
with long claws
rob the travellers
detect in every man
a thief or pickpocket
arrest the innocent
beat recklessly
turn criminal
in uniform
enslave law and liberty
while the watch-dogs sleep
in two houses
they hum around
chewing tobacco

33

God alone knows
what clay they are made of
but I have seen
travelling in Lucknow
bus drivers are annoyed
by conductors' whim

34

There's no penalty
when dogs foul
side-walks, parks
and streets, but if
a man pisses or spits
in a corner
they fine 100 pounds

35

They wanted to write
slogans to transform
their follies into autumn

banners at the gate
flutter between leaves
scratching winter eruptions

they monitor the dead woods
and overlook what goes on
right under their nose

in the name of liberty
take greater liberties
to improve posture of their days

36

The consort of the Earth-Mother
without buttocks our little primate
weeping for others and never for himself
kills with kindness his own children
very few worshippers would realize
whether he wears purple robes or golden sandals
the vermillion-daubed god hides *simia dei*
that mounts on a goat and carries an owl
sucking the monkey with his antics
of love and justice he plays
the lamb, the lion, the pig, and the ape
and proves his virility in the politics
of monkey, cow, and snake

37

Because he was intelligent
and his talent wrecked his life
he wants his son to grow
ignorant and stupid
that he enjoys a quiet life
by becoming a cabinet minister

38

They repeat the blunders
out of ignorance
or kindness

to prove wisdom
bureaucrats
join hands with

politicians and journalists
who appear
in mating season

like dogs in
October and November
and perpetuate the blur

around the hole
to stand in the queue
of decaying ancestors

39

The watery weather
continues to shatter
the mortal shell

one by one
washes the paints
that hide the face

40

Shadows spring from night
whispering darkness fog the streetlight
and I walk alone against the wind

unseen and unheard strangers glide
into dreams mind creates lightless circles
one after another longings

spin their wheels outside me
miracles blind faith inside drugged genes
create human ghoul's droning out

psalms in tenebrous void
my lulling spirit looks for Shamash
to light the woodening house

41

Icy winds howl at the Ganges
cold stars cover the winter sky
at the *alao* they shed silence of agonies

hiding hands in sleeves I walk
my shadows circling back to the beginning
now lost in the drain that was river

42

The works and days' weariness
prolong inside, turn out a smile
rescind the stitches in the sky

half-asleep hysterical night
hoses down the gutters without fuss
I collapse on the open-thighed creek

and feel the whole city in the glen
peel off the illusory flesh-warmth until
the rosy-fingered dawn messes around

43

I wanted to touch a sun
vanished before my hands
became titan to reach
the horizon

44

I see boats sinking and life
bewitched by sufferings, here
is *M* in both palms
still I am no Picasso

45

The snake has slipped out
leaving a dark paint over the ground
shade lingers to remind
the slant moon I held in dark

46

Draped in white the night
embraces ripples
down the terrace the course
defies my gaze
the moon falls into pieces
down my son's cheeks

47

Tonight the icy wind blows
and a huge log (of an uprooted tree)
barely smoulders to warm up
the nameless children of footpaths

I am born in freezing December
and I know well what warmth means
to a ferryman rowing across the river
in the silence of twilight

48

Watching the waves
up and down
I stand
like an island
shielding chaos
I hear the serenade
and live my joy

49

There is altar and fire
but what is this rite
spirits tope and announce
the burial of heaven?

50

Evening's slow pace
against leafless trees
is within me

a whale grows
against dull sea
stars fall mute

dark fingers harpoon
my name through tunnel
night chimes shallow

51

The bones
with curves
kinks and hollow

the true
physicalness

we love
worm-eaten reality

now floats
on river's breast

wrapped in white
moving toward
emptiness

52

Waiting for the light to go out
the night peeps in
through the window
and time passes
poem by poem

53

The withered leaves
blown away in autumn
come again with the tired rains

the season confers
through the soft grey clouds
the growing freshness on naked trees

54

Your vacant eyes
reveal this city:
dim, absent-minded, humid
orchestrating bronchial noises
by night 'quakes in the face
swash my deep peace

in cells naked gods nudge
borrowed girls with wealth
uncreate their seeds
for hurried happiness
boats toss about on
prostituting men and women

55

There is something in the air
the tree tops announce
but I walk in sleep

candied ideas
shine like light
and the third day ends

56

Walking along the waterfront
I've watched the dark waves
with rope in thousand hands
to bind the dragon

my smoke-drenched spirit
and black patches remind
my eating yams raw
and the dragon fleeing

57

It rises like a flame
burns in silence
straight, without wavering
light in peace
radiates love:
I fish I in me
the stream and ocean merge

58

The expanding rings of the sun
cobweb my being and things
all around cluster from dawn to dusk
the myth repeats itself

the leaping light from my depths
is the halo round the paper-god's head
stirring the radiance and soul and all
it's the equation of live, die and be

but the confounding solitude at this hour
conspires to hallow its sombre sight
my feelings mirror in the absolute
of blind prayers and short visions

59

Death comes from the south
like cool pleasant wind
and cheats the guard with spear

lest the heat burn the universe
the mare is hidden in water
and flames rise in flood

what if my hair falls
Shiva is planted deep
and the serpent is eternal

60

There is no rest
even after death
body is cut open
to detect
the cause of death
then burnt to ashes
to crown formality

61

Rooted in twilight, dreaming
pruning spring thoughts
a partitioned façade

this empty cell of time
is me weaving heat
in unholy solitude

climbing rickety heights
booze or castor oil sex
to suspend creation

62

I dance the magic
and ritual of the moon
with darkness like rock

on the island in me
Uhuru stands like lingam
pink mood turns violet

63

Love is
to wash your hand
before touching the penis
in obeisance to lingam
the climax of creation

love is
to gather molecules
of happiness in flesh
and merge in rapture
to propitiate Shiva

64

The sangam of Ganga and Yamuna
is a homosexual union
charming but sterile

my friend knows well
the road to heaven doesn't go
through snaky waters

65

From the sea of days and years
I gather white sand
drifted on the beach
in the shells waves bring
I search my name

like a timeless thought
from first to last it remains
revolving like the earth
the sun in me rises and sets
and I dance my silence on the ocean floor

I wake in the morning to the tiring screams
then out of the bed and away from wife
get lost in the sickening routine
in Dhanbad the dark worries
 --no light, no water
 no sugar, no oil
 his notes and bickerings
 and tensions and allergies
 and threats and coercions
 and academic conspiracies—
create nightmares between 6 and 10
the fears are real with curses on lips

I fight with the devils desiring
to procreate christians
--fill the pits they dig all day
or stamp on evils till evil ends—
while others watch from behind the curtain
maybe, laugh at my massacring the time
or the sold-out dons despise
my odd politics or opposite look
at ISM they feed on snakes
and shrink and shrivel everyday
the self-waste and wars and cries
reduce man to nought I see
every moment they muck in mocks
and my own shoes pinch when I walk

It is the same house
the same alcove
I shed my loneliness in
reading prayers and psalms
chanting mantras in fumes

it is the same room
the same cement rack
crowded with earthen idols
of Ganesh and Lakshmi
worshipped last Diwali

it is the same altar
the same paper-Kali
framed in glass and
dusted with sindoor
my wife puts each day

it is the same floor
the same four walls
god watched us sweeping
and purifying with *dhoopam*
each evening before bed

it is the same prayers
the same pleasures
we rejoice with impulse
they savour with sacrilege
our rituals of lust and labour

it is the same incommunicado
the same swearing by coal
in the dark alley
nothing had changed
and nothing changes

68

In the eyes of my little son
I saw Kali dancing that day
without words moving flames
built the cross I loved
and his falling tears drove me
to the little psalms
I read long long ago

he wanted me to go back
to the yearning loneliness
and cried: "Papa, *dua*, pray"

perforced I closed my eyes to escape
the thorns of stained hours but
never knew he had reached
the twilight ocean of love

it was a strange white sun
softly closing on me like an angel
my son stood on his little legs
by Christ and Mohammad, and Kali
kissed us with her bloody lips
and Shiva guided my way through silence
homeward I returned a changed man

69

Move your oars faster, O boatman
I must rush to the bank
before the sun dies
and search my son
lost from the sacred precincts

move your oars faster, O boatman
I must catch the bird
before it flees in the blue
and I hear the dusk
empty in monotone

move your oars faster, O boatman
I must reach my home
before the snakes of the river shroud my bed
and my being is questioned
by the silence of the watery night

70

After burning heat of May
I'd thought with rains
will come God's grace
gentle like new grass

but before little leaves from
cracks of the walls smiled
goats trampled the flower-beds
and grazed away all our dreams

71

The little paper boats
drift on the surface
without concern
the wind blows

my little son plays
unconcerned with the world
of drifting waters
we live in day and night

72

It's utter helplessness
true, but to survive
one must be tamed

73

This moment
visits the dark
alleys of my body

as a guest sleeps
like my son
in my lap

74

The waves in me rise
like thousand-hooded snakes
strike the shores:

the rock stands undisturbed
the shores don't move
the sea returns

75

There is a wave
which never reached
the shore:

it only pushed
the waves ahead
and broke

76

I prune my thoughts
to write well
to be simply understood

I don't want
to outwit my readers
I am no celebrity

but they don't want me
to grow like a tree
spreading branches

they appoint a gardener
to prune my limits:
my shades are uncomfortable

77

A poem
elusive like a butterfly
is the dynamics
of a culture
a process of exchange
a cultural artifact
fascinating
stimulating
reshaping
reader and creator
it incorporates
multiplicity
of modern man
fluid, mobile
multicultural
manipulating
matrix of tongues
and patterns of languages
into a stable whole
of self awareness

78

Exploring its own limits
the form manipulates relationship
between consciousness and self-consciousness
as in film flickering shadows
turn traditional metaphors
into contemporary realities
(or, separate art from life
in its quest for modernity)
inviting audience to reflect
across cultures and countries
proffering society's vision
of itself for itself
manifesting common humanity

79

What am I digging
in the graveyard
of memory?
a handful of images
to create a new myth?
or some space
to bury my being
with orisons
and burn every tomb?
or seal
the faint flame
that used to burn
within?
the long darkness
in the skull
is twice terrible
than life
I can't weave
gaudy mess
of dreams any more

80

A poet's simplicity
is misunderstood
so I keep quiet
but what if
my silence
is misunderstood?

2.

MUSIC MUST SOUND

1971-1985

1

A poem is
like life

sound
and silence

movement
and stillness

fragment
and wholeness

avibhiktam
vibhakteshu

like Shiva
and Shakti

lotus
and mud

2

I knock at your body's door
or peep into the room
through the little crack
for a bit of love
squeezing my rise above
the cynosure and reduce
to a drop at the labial depth

3

Wheezing and sleepless in wintry discomfort
when she enters with her warmth for a moment
it becomes spring in moonlight

I walk with assurance of refreshing love
for a moment forget the decree of coal-dust
breathe in air of pure passion

4

I thought I knew her before and my heart bowed to her native virtues
each touch she offered stirred and drew me near
before entering her depths I felt how dark was the dance
I never liked to part with her but the tears in her eyes were saying: 'no, no'

5

Your face lights up my dark chamber
the moon reclines on my bosom
this evening steals your fragrance

6

I want to rest in your lap
and drink from your golden breasts
hide me in the curtain of your hair
shield me in the grove of your flesh

7

**Won't you share
my aloneness
tonight?**

**I need
female smell
in bed**

**let's kiss
each other in our
strangeness**

8

**When Renoir or Cezanne or Matisse or Picasso
can play with body and capture the soul
why not poets draw on beauty in darkness
and speak in the language of Body, or write all**

**that animals do and men conceal in light
the aching peace must get its sway
good or bad what's empty must be filled
if life vibrates music must sound**

9

**Call it spoof
or nirvana
if you like**

**hidden between thighs
is the spring music
beyond birth**

10

A myth
like prejudice
is turned lovely
with rituals
when we search
faith
against ourselves
in ourselves

11

A flying horse perched
on the island of her flesh
without conquering the ocean:

whirlwinds galloped
his funeral parade
between the cracks

12

Singing the rituals of flesh
midst the sound of frogs
and owls by the window
I bury a sultry night
in the mosquito-net

13

Stooping over his gravid love
while he neared the coital bliss
the little child woke up
with erect penis cried
to spoil sex she slipped aside
and put out her breast to feed him
in semi-darkness virility foiled
the slough face down

14

In the blue space of mind
Winnipeg plays her games
as in waking hours
weaving shapes in holy precincts
I recover my lost child
and the old priest calls me back
with a pearl to save my soul:
dulcet sounds ring again to celebrate
my move above the nights

15

The dress hides
undress
and you look beautiful

16

She gives up all for love
that denies to give her due
and wanders with passionate humanity
never blaming her authors of gloom

transmuting her past through tears
shedding sadness and reaching joy
like an exiled goddess
she lives and braves tortures

17

How hard we try to empty
the vessel that holds our seed
in her deep pleasure turns painful
causes depression after two children
we want non-creative sex:
now clean cobwebs that hold red flow
to release our post-lunch tension

18

Leaves fall
in a dust-ridden city

stars grin and body burns
vultures hover all around
passions breed in pigsty
she has shaved chromosomes

under a bloody roof
my tattered trousers remind
the bed sheets love stained
before light shone

in a sulphurous pond
I display
my naked person
to ghosts and witches

19

The flame swallows the creeping road
rays foreshadow the mountainous heave
evening is dry without love
life is nothing and nothing is made

under the banana grove God smiles
at the fall of man and whole race
of Adam is polluted with wild eyes

I am a snake without Eden
my nights are sunny and share
beams of hundreds of whores in Acheron
clouds rain pestilence in the belly
of a dragon I breathe fire
and become ash of a smuggled cigar
inside I run out manducating concupiscence

20

When I read the eyes of darkness
and loneliness in my room
I slip into my bed and unbutton
with a craving of the *malpakara*
knowing well when
it's not a girl or wife
sexploitation is no sin

21

Every stain on the bed speaks
of offence done to
self, lover, sweetheart
I am reminded of acts
day and night
and pretend
hot tea from my cup
has scattered

22

Once your body was the sitar waiting for my touch
the sweet fragrance of your hair still lingers
but the cigarette that was mine is now ash

23

Islands grow like mounts
in the midst of the sea
my palm is full of circles and triangles
my fate I know too well
the crone ready to cast
a new Judgment of Paris

on the mount of Venus
is an apple
I wonder if my wife
too has sensed it

24

Giggling behind the hill
is the woman I knew
if you touch my finger
you shall know
what winter is

25

Naked
without ring
my finger
a widow

26

Darkness is a whore
I sleep with
cross-legged

without copulation
last night parted
with sinking acid

27

Road to VD through
Assembly of God over the bridge
flying cars of the State
on walls slogans of commercial gods
and the name of Gandhi shadowed
by the crossed trees near Hydel
DANGER board shifts
my gaze to veiled beauties
moving like thoughts
with the best of motives
manoeuvre to kill a poet
learning the secret of
the first menstrual flow

28

Dancing on the top of the tower
his religious fans plan to erect
Shiva's phallus as token of love
turn naked all men and women

before union the tower collapses
with their guru they fall into the forest
and rise again as apes the third day

29

The bearded swamy's
vedantic discourse
goes over head
in empty solitude
he speaks
as a dying man
to dying men

30

Mute pavements
shelter meditators
in milky silence

passing beauties
denuded in water
skin shrinks

at the Ganges in Kartik
old gods leer at
their wet bare backs

in bleeding cold
'aum' is convenient
to soothe *vasanas*

no more Ashwapathys please
they're hung up, racing in jet
to catch two white moons

31

What's this sadhana
that he throws the bowl
at a man in the circle
and he dies instantly?

but I look for the jackal
escaping his aim

32

Simulating mysticism
they fill the hollows
through jugglery
conceal their
fractured faith

33

The night died
for nobody trimmed
the wick of lamp

34

A monkey turned the coat
to let off snakes
hidden in velvet lining

35

One by one
when the lamps are put out
every floor is dark
in this house

36

Calculating fate
through zodiac maze
last night I discovered
a dotty god rising
out of a dead oyster

37

The night drips
from their faces
like the rains

assails my vision

I fail to distinguish
man from beast

38

When there's no market for most speech
who'll read my loose ramblings:
it's silly to wander far off
to designs to dismiss reality
or configurations called poetry

39

In mind
his eyes fire
his images
nightmare
the poor soul
in scorpion cage
cannot brave
the dark combats

40

I dig my mind to
unmemory the past
and become voice and time
to redeem the icy sun

to wake up the hibernating wind
long blind to dust
swirling in shapes
under emergency light

coloured virtues on sale
reflecting the night of bodies
craving burial in the thicket
of cosmetic hair

in dull music about me
flesh-eaters starving for the soul
as I kill an arrogant
snake at my door

41

The golden orb
through pricking trails
from east to west
concentrates dark
in life love separates
to upset balance
waking and sleeping
I look up and purge
static madness

42

After these hot noons
the earth
mates with rainbow
I breathe my son's smile
and forget the darkness growing

43

This evening's smile
seems conspiring with floating shadows
swains rehearse in dark corners
with cigarettes
I simply gobble the scene

44

It makes interesting
to be naughty for a while:

to wee at a lamp post
to peek at someone's privates

or doodle vulgar graffiti
on the desk or in the loo

say something mucky or ogle
after a chaser it's good

to be bad occasionally
living becomes less boring

45

The webs that hide still time
I must clean and banish
Saul from my home:
his bait is subtle

I must work out my salvation
and find again the bread of life
through the maze of rootlessness
fragmented memories and finger prints

the faceless figures in the dark
mock with amputated legs
in the museum eternity is locked:
I must rise again before extinction

46

Smoke rises from the church
Christ burns gradually
the ultimate dust rests
in His hands
for recreation
of a new lamb

47

The race of life
with an awful shadow
anterior or posterior—to darkness:

I am only moving
in the crowd of roads
in search of a road

48

Across the brown woods
I climb the naked hills
where tempests can't reach
nor waves rise to collapse

my being watches the evening star
hanging through heaven I lose
and find again the snowy light
transposing crimson arc in east

nobody sees the lotus smile
the calm behind the chaos
fleeting breaths commemorate
hopes of eden on earth

a mystic repose or agony
I don't know blooms, flows
or overwhelms world's soul
in me time weds eternity

49

I don't know the little beauty
my son curiously chases
in the wild flowers
butterfly is angelic
fleeting each time
he reaches to catch

50

Stars on the earth these glow-worms
I want to clasp in hand and offer
God as flowers of
obeisance

51

The sun sheds its radiance
over the hills as if
they water the slope with blood
to keep the eternal green
the deciduous days near end
I see the sheol rising
upon the ocean of spring
many unmoor to sail
many draw in the womb of air

52

There is a road in the forest
I haven't trampled yet
a light glows always

for a fresh touch in planet's belly
I look out from my suspended window
and they say there is nothing

the hungry skin for an avalanche
and parabolic movement in space
don't translate my existence

on paints their homage coeval
with icy expectations I stand
and feel the warmth Death brings

53

The blue hillocks look at the vegetation below
green forests, orchids, firs and pines smile
over the rocky slopes horses graze and
down below a river teems with fishes
in the Land of Dragon Paro is a bride
beautiful, angelic, loving
everyone cherishes her matutinal grace
I love her, and love the mastoid mountains
of Druk Yul, a greater heaven on earth

54

The road never runs
straight in mountains
life means hazards

my line of fate runs
straight and smooth yet
roses bloom with thorns

55

**There is no tree
over the mountain
I rest in shade
of a wandering cloud**

56

**Ripples of darkness
tear the river
flowing within**

**I hear shrieks
of shadow amid
savage hails**

57

**Shroud of fragrance
in a closed room**

**and a ghost
at the threshold**

**gnats and kites
abide my triumph**

**it all looks
like an island**

58

There's no love-substitute
and in no church there's a prayer for me
there is no one to say
may God be with you till we meet again

the empty vessel pasquinades *passe*
and my falling hairs speak of the dreams
now appear like universe on palms

they read my tortile fate and interpret
the checkmated love in terms of input
inhume my hopes of happiness sometimes
I wonder if I am living or dead

59

It is not the surf
by the sea I watch
the crashing waves
on the shore I hear
the music of the wind
that stirs my soul:
you shut your eyes
and feel at home

60

The rock stands midst the sea
bulls of Bashan beset me
with snares of death
floods rise and go:

dark waters turn bright
waves touch my feet
the shepherd washes me clean
midst the sea rock stands

61

Scooped in the belly
of a huge airbus
it's only sunset

62

Locked in giant *Chandragupta*
I fly over snow stacked stones
and defy clouds in unseen sun

63

He walks through the high walled narrow lanes
where children play with dead or dying dogs
that eat their own stinking flesh
he sees them sitting over the running wheels
murdered innocence peep out from windows
but no one bothers the tragic turn

64

Connaught Place, Janpath and Parliament Street look
like a platform of some busy railway station here
night is the same as day people run after
the buses or wait with their burdens
pushing or kicking insidiously doing all
mischiefs in and out I see
attempts to hide something insignificant
and so important goes uncared
my messianic dream welters on the bleeding breasts of Delhi
Playboys and *Penthouses* cry "Mai? Mai?"
with hold-me-tight arguments of the saucy sweet
I hear the mosaic deafs and dumbs telling
whither goes my Sinai?

65

Rouged faces of working girls
in DTC buses give
frustration
black joys of life
taking turns
against red lights
on the road

66

They board and alight
like the birds flying
from trees in the morning
wander without signature
in the evening
get lost in dark

67

After a tortuous journey left alone
a homeless wanderer comes
to the land of mines following
the dream-*chandan* and –*geru* in can
rusted stones and square smile
pelicans pictured at Nalsarovar
against a blissful clime he sues
black dusts and pollution without
going down the earth on way
spots places and people secretly
appeared many a time crawling
on a minotaur's belly intumesced
he thinks the machine is overworked
in yawning hours he eats
goats' testicles and omelette to green
his nocturnal craze invaginates
the blues of a road, it's vugs and turns
deo volente he treks for better

68

I play that I'm happy
like a child secretly complain

waking before the sun
I feel my taste and warm myself
against a rain of smoke

it smells only foul
like the toilet near my room

69

Crushed heads of serpents coil along the road
green glitter of stream strikes my vision
I walk and fear the growing ripples in urinal

70

I don't see crows
turn into cuckoos
or herons into swans
in this jungle
viruses haunt
air and water

no Agastya rises
from the pitcher
no holy man changes
the corrupt roots

ignorance feeds faith
all around
rahus eclipse moon
and *gurus*
like comets grow
to sink life
in wild ocean

71

Going down the dark corridor
I breathe smog in the morning
walking is a quick dose to death:

traffic roars though invisible now
black layers rest on leaves
where is fresh air?

I cough my allergies and swallow pills
to live in a safer tomb

72

The Thames tolerates
bridging so much
I fear one day
she'll disappear
leaving behind
a nullah known
only to MPs
or intruders
in Queen's bedroom

73

The Ganges condescended
to flow down from Shiva's matted hair
with white laughter
from the Himalayas to Kashi
it shone so pure and bright
but failed to quench
the earthly thirst
or cleanse the human heart
their sinful mind
the goddess couldn't change
I clearly see in its apparent grace
missing all turbulence
so necessary to wash out
the ills of ages it seems
it's lifeless now
impotent to set right
the rotten state of man

74

Young girls and women move up and down
in the boat standing on the river bank
they carry sand for their bread
and fling down the basket, sun smoulders

men sit on the terrace and smoke hashish at noon
crack private jokes, watch sullen grace
the drowsy river flows with the city's garbage

75

Is there enough water to quench
my body burns within
the little liquid's restless
and the black doctor awaits
a handful ashes
to propitiate Shiva
the red eyes deride
my passionate labour
and the scourge sears each bone
it seems I'm a dumb rock
no Christ will call a church
yet the flames rise
high in sky burn
burn
what can I do
if there is no water?

76

I fear the desert in sky
and hate clouds on hills
I doubt rain is potent
earth is winned by whores

77

When things were good and happy
I knew the love of all
now nobody knows me here

78

Love or friendship in this land
is a hoax
each morning and evening
my tent is set afire
and they say
night is illumined

79

It turns my lips blue
and fingers freeze in icy wave
I breathe frost and shiver

in the coldest ever Delhi
get up before every one and move out
for bread

80

They say
I'm a good person
plain and simple

a poet suffering
at the hands
of evil persons

like Christ
crucified with
thieves beside

and didn't he cry
"Eloi! Eloi!
lama sabachthani?"

I cry at the 19th hour
of a sour day
"O God, O God"

81

Doctor Chakroverty
damned Mrs Gandhi
damned Nixon
damned politics
called them rogues
when I said
they're fools
he said
no

82

An ideal minister
is a miracle of cunning
like the jackal in fables
who ate the heart
and ears of the ass
only to deny
like the fox that ate
the deer's heart
and declared later
it hadn't any

83

Mr Dange lauds
action against smugglers
and accepts a purse of
4.5 lakhs from working people
on his birthday
I wonder how masses
subsisting on 36 paise
could collect such a dough

84

The best
of seven nations hanging
in her closet because
she's the wife
of a senior bureaucrat

85

Splendid
these rats
enjoy favours
give nothing
receive all

86

The telephone receiver
like a hooded snake
pretty, but full of poison

87

The dance about light
humming mosquitoes
in the evening
griefs can't be trimmed
if stings are deep:
night lurks on concerns
of the day between
surpluses and scarcities
I scratch tissues
of impairing events
or bite the curly language
to redeem hollow inside
dread of dying sun
and insects outside conspire
against wind that burrs the leaves
of years (or spiders' net
in annually-cleaned corners?)
shacked up, in a shambles now
stamped with mosquitoes' blood
my palms conceal failures
I can never erase
I can't recover light
buried in a grave
it's difficult
to keep form and flow

88

Sceptical yet innocent I look below the flyover
deserted landscape overrun by chained dogs and bitches while
parasites walk leisurely on the solitary road
I long to talk to someone

the sky is blind and mute
too are the directions hollow winds
blow over my head with frozen
fingers I negotiate budding leaves

images blister under yellow skins
I see cold shadows at dusk
read new myths and metaphors
in vain defy months old exile

89

Civilization
in a poor nation
is death by
methyl isocyanate

hanging heavily
by multinational grace
in the cold night

each house turns a mortuary
mixing the dead and the dying
and the living turning blind

only fossils snivel

dreams dust-mingle
broken visions lock
wide sky in ice-blue eyes

what have we left?

nothing remains
and none live to watch
the grand finale
of human achievement

90

The room is shrinking
from all sides narrowing
shaped by fear and grief

my bones frenzied
festooned with creepers
escape to touch the sky

91

The sun is indifferent there
the moon doesn't weep
in Beirut butchered children
and bulldozed bodies testify
to man's savage growth
from Moses to Mohammad
ideals and dreams breed slaughter
for existence barbarians
need cosmetic excuses?

92

We decry
discrimination
of the sort
we practise
at home:

in Calcutta
if lifts don't carry
"Servants, dogs, and luggage"
why grudge
the South African notices
"dogs and natives
are not allowed"?

93

It's outrageous
with headless heads
and paper tigers
roaring from the top

and cows resting in the porch
or listening to lectures
and dogs and goats roaming in the verandah
it's a cattle's paradise

humanities courtyard
is a litter of puppies and paper plates
after the seminar
they pretend to get mired in textbooks

who can stop the wheel
if it performs well
and the punctures stay unseen

He is the Son of God
the ISM messiah
come to redeem us
from Lucifer's friends

(don't call him Satan
we aren't in Hell)

he is the eternal image of man
in his own halo of goodness
shines with the monarch's glitter

he has the wisdom of the self-raised
and is sweet and moral and unselfish
an iconoclast, my friend
has the valour of Hercules:
he sets fire to the tails of foxes
and drives them to his neighbour's fields

(I have seen the burning crops many times)

he is the evening dragon
sows by night and ploughs in darkness

"And from Rebellion shall derive his name,
Though of Rebellion others he accuse."

fighting corruption with corruption he says
he helps us regain the lost paradise

though not a novice in politics
my friend can brag and boast
his treachery and tricks match
Samson of the Book of Judges

he is so sharp and simple
he denudes everyone
(it is his mission)

I love his venom
his heart is his mouth he says
(alas, he knew the tragedy of Coriolanus)

my friend is the ISM hero

**active all day and night
to set right the course of his alma mater**

may God bless him

95

**Who will sing for you
in the street
when all your life
you ballooned words
in coffee houses
or the offices
to create epic
with scratchy jargon?**

**now watch
your black mushrooms
grow wild
in the drawing room**

**do you fear
your shark teeth
in action?**

96

**I am a man
if you want to see
your image
you'll see
your distortion only**

97

**What's this
music of life
vibrating but
soundless?**

3.

MEMORIES UNMEMORIED

1986-1987

1

**Oasis in memories
of desert rhythm of wilderness
sand is the poetry**

2

**Man turns a shadow
under tree arches rainbow
is the moonlight fog**

3

**My restlessness blooms
not thought but ulcer in the
stomach the flux of**

**shadows shape loss of
my son in the picture hall
I 'wait interval**

4

**Do you hear pulses
of memory in graveyard
she groans in her dream**

**I search my voice in
echoes that break silences
of the soul in space**

5

Is it her quietus
that she roars
in herself
like a sea
waves upon waves
leaps upon herself?

6

He unpetals a rose
searching seeds through
tangled fingers
in thorny womb
it's bleeding hopes

7

She picks out black seeds
of some flowers and says: "Papa,
these are souls, let's sow them here
tomorrow they'll grow as ghosts"

8

As I curled 'long her
we became a small rainbow
playing earth and sky

in half-dream weaving
legends of love in moments
unmemoried years

9

I leave my memories
in prayerful trance
float above my body

till rapping her fingers
at my soul she breaks
the silence: "I've come

with my dreams promised
years ago. Won't you
once kiss and melt in me?

10

Blessed is
the bedroom
the bathroom
the kitchen
the drawing room
the terrace
the lawn
and every little
place and spot
where we prayed
or sexed together
we glorified our house
and declared His mysteries

11

Love is efflux
from her body spreading
all round the parabolic hue
enlightens the self
my being I merge
in her glowing presence

12

Dancing shades devour
waking tensions for a moment
closed eyes dissolve
years of clog
within the four walls
the flame is freed
from cloying dalliance
for a moment
it's all calm
in her presence

13

When I wanted
to change seats
my friend said
she can, only if
the door's locked
the lights out
and her mommy in
another city

14

She slams the door
to powder herself
or spray Eau de Toilette

in bed strange
I hear only
the kettle sing

15

While I sweat
in mosquito-net
waiting for a kiss
she goes to sleep
loosening her breasts and
removing her feet and eyes
and covers them under the sheet
for safe-keeping

16

If passion breeds beads of sweat
in winter night the plateau is reached
too much love can run one out

17

Down the corridors of night
I see love dying
for a chance vegetation
in sleepless dreams

18

Among the white hairs
a solitary black one
keeps her hope alive

19

Layers of dust thicken
on the mirror water
makes the smuts prominent:
I wipe and wipe and yet
the stains stay like sin

20

My wife laughs when I say
man seldom loves beauty:

when he sees a woman
he only sees her busts and bottoms
and length of bone in mouth

intellectualising his itches
he yearns to sink in mud
by the fig-leaf hue of hair

21

When the oleander was drying
I peed at its roots
three times a day
she laughed at me

but the shrub survived
and bloomed all red
“How beautiful” she said

when I plucked them for puja
this morning she shouted
“Don’t defile my goddess
these flowers smell pee”

22

Their nude dance
is no mean art
to rouse passion:

with apple flowers
they race
to find match
for upstanding nipples
under transparent blouse

23

Charm is the
spirit of beauty
divine
mysterious
honest
expression of the self
not seen
but felt

24

Away from myself
I need a little breathing
with my back straight

for a spell of privacy
in my happier deep
the womb of December

and hear the first cries
I cried with the sun
in a pure moment

25

The quietest moment
when one is ones own
is in toilet or bath
reflecting inside out

through daily deeds
listening to whispers that rip
cosmetic simplicity or
split the landscape in hands

when elusive strength
blasts in silent search
in hollowness leaving
a dazed mind in crypt

26

The gates that clang
won't still with poems
between their jaws

I must stop winds
to prevent them tossing
into the empty void

27

With the passage of time the sun's become dull and unrefreshing
like my dreams turned weaker than weariness now
in the desert of desires no cactus blooms
nor a hand beckons me back to a world of hope

here breathing fossils and watching snaky waves
let me grab a moment for poetry and live:
I pity the mind that harbours ages of anguish
and crawls consciousness through knots in wrinkles

28

Poetry is not
just functional
like brief-case

it is personal—
an extension
of my self

29

I live with
ailments like
fretful years
creating gospels that
support the world
and sting my days
with cold fictions

30

They say Jupiter
reveals the inner man
the invisible hidden within
and my horoscope spotlights
the direction of my destiny
the *sanskar* of my soul
well-placed as benefactor

but what is the spiritual progress
with a strong drink in hand
the visible heaven in the present
the pitch that directs the runs
the battles I fight for existence
in Saturn world without
energy, life or joy?

31

What is this life
like the sun rising and dying
someone beginning and someone stopping
without presence being felt
without effect, striking, ending
long rituals of waste?

nothing saved except
years squandered in bed
feigning and unfeigning
the blood flows but doesn't complain:
time seals the strife
born, married and dead?

32

Each one fears
each one is insecure
here each one doubts
with clouds in the mind

each house is a secret
silent arrogance bridges
distance between the hands
and what they need

they don't speak out but search
their fate in circles of coffee
if bored of the drudgery
see terror in their own piss

or dig atoms of betrayal in walls
that make up the secret
and sleep their drugged nights
murmuring the bank balance

33

Their hands are sulphur
with butcher strength
above the pit they drift
like shadow against dying sun
longer than themselves
against the floodlight from dome
they create new 'glyphs
to feed night to sunken world

34

The morning's withered flesh
and swollen skin of the day
by bloody nullah in smoke
tears shade tomorrow
like today, everyday they cry
but nobody hears groans, or sees
dark eruptions on naked walls
that hide maps of bones
and skeins of dreams piled
beside broken hearth fate
is a luxury of helplessness
they won't believe or accept
if there is a hell on earth
it's here, it's here, it's here

35

Boneless shadows
empty lawns
moon through ribs
of the arbour and tumult
of the flesh crack
shells of pain:

whose are the hands
that weave nightmares
with ashes of rose
and face of a woman?

36

The old rats
in nature's breach
design new rooms
to negotiate disgrace

and belief beyond election
with plastic sense
enrich their substance
drinking, voting, smiling

37

A horse-headed thief
bullied the bearded man
like the mythical demon
who disappeared with the Vedas
but no fish appeared
to rescue him

38

Every face
is a finger
peeling off
skin like banana
erect or twisted

39

Man
with head
twisted like a
manager's tail in chair
before boss with
pen in
blood

40

My bones have holes for eyes
I search my teeth in the muck
leeches have sucked my blood
where's the lout who ate my flesh?

41

Beard grows like fog
on their cheeks
in half-dead streets
night slides like yoke
to release them
in glass chambers
mummies need no sun

42

Sheep grazing the rainy green
after days of sunless day
crouching I stir from hibernation
seeking a handful belonging
in aloneness of wild growth
eluding the mossy gateway and
patterns of walls, sheep and sun

43

Suddenly through the spring
blows hot the wind
circulating colours of summer

shabby roads and houses
dust inside outside
melt silence like tar

or bleach skulls that thought
once, now fossil like rocks
in ageless hibernation

my quest ends or stirs
lewd rituals stomping
about fresh bit in thongs

I don't know what it is
the cheek of terror or sweat of skin
or wind is gasping for breath?

44

They take away the day's flower
husk I retain for tomorrow
nobody knows what the robbers may look for

45

What I write shows
my past even if frail
like leaves of years:
I love the wind if
it makes the city flutter

46

Harmony in duality
is unity of tongues
to sculpt new dreams

made of living rock
we aren't different
in our same land:

our poems are woven
from the same skein of language
weathered by time and nature

47

The solitary bird
like uninspiring tracks moves
alien homeward

The whispers of the forest
inside me
will be quiet tomorrow
and no tree will weep

no one knows
what was the weather like
in the heart
negotiating ideas and images

4.

FLIGHT OF PHOENIX

1987-1989

1

**I make myself man
each time I create
setting, character, tone
in a poem
create poetic sense
disclose my natural being
playing five senses
my distortions and inversions
evolve in history and society
to save the man in me
through poetry of self**

2

**The seed of my song
lies deep in memory
like paddy in field

blooms ages when wind
blows inside out and grows
genes in womb, turns self**

3

A poem is madness
unique fascination
liberating language
re-creates, re-symbolizes
disfiguring the known
secured norms
inverting the safe
existence

4

When sleepless poetry
fails to negotiate night
I wait for white dreams

5

The halo of my vision
is the Mother's gaze:

he whom I seek is
hidden in her eyes

shedding hope and love
all around her mercy

6

Love is my prison
and freedom both
in her presence
my wish her wish

to be everything
her shiva and
shakti a dual-single
me and she, one

7

Love leads to beauty
and vision with perfection
pillar of dust or

fleeting shadow can
turn into light revelling
pure songs wrought out of

the clay blending joys
in naked passion seek signs
of self-discovery

roving with delight
and perfume of fellowship
in valley of peace

8

Love without clothes
without bone has
a joy within:
soft smooth and full

like the mind
creative and
erogenous

9

When I inhale in
your mouth and exhale stroking
hairs or caressing
I ride you into joy and
make you hail the morning like earth

10

Rocked or burning within
poor performer
turns the hell inside out

can't dance on a taut rope
with fragile legs
enjoy flames of passion

love is a high explosive
not charged by
induced sexuality

11

Frosted faces dissolve in
stale rain clutching
female body and

poached contexts dizzyingly slip
from a vineyard
who'll treat them angels?

12

How can a poet
pierce through tamed passages
in the wolves' psyche

too scared to peep:
in the walled academy
they lope with cold eyes

shielding some dumb myths
or haunted by empty hunts
parrying moments of truth

13

There's nothing comfortable in the chilly gray wind and
what burns at the wintry end in Holi splash of colours
unglow what might have been left in ransacked ashes
they all witness the last shot of season in transition
like bare-branched trees unrelieving miseries of truth
in the unspirited campus and inscrutable shades

14

Winter is caught in
waves of narrow discussions
under the blanket
fingers move by nipples erect
without sensing consummation

15

I feel alone
like a wandering bird
without a nest:

empty without flame
the cave of the heart reeks of
forsaken island

16

Each day I construct
my self in new desires and
end in emptiness

a hollow shadow
I move in dust and rest in
stony webs of haze

17

In a grey morning
it's a foggy silent world
the stink of darkness

when'll the gulf open
stir the still horizons red
and swallow the wood

18

It needs heat
to eject a seed
and ripen to fruit:

mind makes its image
with imprints dumped in
forging rhymes

19

Bones of levity criss-cross
at the bottom of silence
there is no shape in the mind

20

As I did not earn my cross
they cheated me when
I bought it to pray

the satan sought my consent
to sin in silence
I was duped again

21

Memory fades
like her body
in dim light

I bury my head
in open hands
to escape noises

22

Is it the heat wave
or stupor that I see
shadows in the dark
and call it vision?

23

Summer turns prettier
after dust storm or rain
night alloys with cool colours

24

The colour of night is the same everywhere
what if my identity is not known
let's fuck the moment and forget the place

25

Waking up from a drugged sleep
I remember I was a butterfly
or butterfly dreamt me?

a sun away the brown of the walls
seemed flying with her shawl
and I couldn't overlook

I hunt a forgotten scene
outside the dusty road in summer
the flowers yellow and die

26

This morning autumn moves in the pool
I watch the deciduous trees and leaves' decay
the air whirling with dust

the drains are choked and my forehead
smudged like the stained table:
the more I clean the more dirty

and the slow sun smiles in the backyard
over the bony back of a stray cow
I look for a bit of green at my door

but goats have jumped the fence
there's just one papaya flower
and remains of *ber* parrots dropped

it's the same old agony in changing hues:
should I steal colours from butterflies
or contract prayers in their little wings?

27

From stony breaches
by roadside erupt
wild plants and creepers

through moss search their trellis
perhaps mime my attempts
at survival against

broken fences flinty knots
and shapeless shades in evening

28

The river walks without shoes
unsinging the night's hooligans
that scamper across the city

unbreasted years ago for
hawks of peace now midgeted
to amuse mornings that gaol

all fire and thoughts smitten by stones
of figures-to-be hewing
new melodies by black grass

past my shadow overarching
all listening and light and cliff
that hang the tale or pain the legs

no matter I walk without
the rest of the ground I tread
like river droning day's ashes

29

The frog in mirror
slips by damp towel
cold sets in slippy hands

rain flows on windows
black water crawls down
like diseased reptiles

why scrub the smelly
underbellies
there's no paradise

30

With blurred landscape
painting dust all around
they become dust
fail to live life
hiding it from others
from themselves fail

31

The mask of man they paint
with so many fingers as brushes
man's only colour now

32

They hide the mirrors
with rose and lipstick
and keep their fiction

33

Apple, snake and three-fifths of me
in bed manipulates man
inside selfish rubbles

34

Growing hair on soul
man longs for known grooves of death
safe in sterile womb:

loving, impotent
lost in vanity and self-
commiseration

35

How many defy
the space between
sleep and leap

I hear sounds
of cracked mirrors
and torn veils

36

Crazy these people
don't know how to go
down with the swirl and
up with the whirl but
play in the raging water:
who can find the green dragon
lost in the yoni without?

37

**Your black sunglasses
conceal the face that reveals
the real you in sun**

38

**Face lotus
tongue sandal
manners sweet**

**heart scissors
I know him
seasoned crook**

39

**We are a nation
of cowards worshipping dumb
images can't stand
a full-fleshed person speaking
nude in god's home like in bed**

**performing love with
wife or self in dark alone
ever ignorant**

**moralizing
hell of fear
with legs tucked up
posing brave**

40

Fear in the mind
runs us this way
and that reaching
nowhere spitting
anger against wind
singing threnodies
or cursing fate

41

Can't you drop your saree
and all that conspires to conceal
your nudity, my love

forsake your modesty
and see the naked passion in
my eyes seeking freedom

to unite and transform
the night through body's dark alleys
don't you love your freedom?

42

Scratching between his legs
he crept towards the fence
and said something to her

gawd, in a minute
I see her tending the blouse
half-hidden by roses

43

He presses her skin
or tastes the salty sweat
night singes genes in bed
love's eunuch game turns in
dreams to feed indigence
leaning on sticky backs
of dead orisons

44

She put him off each time
he caressed her or
tried to kiss or crossleg
even bought her presents
to make her agree
but she won't care
till he raised the stick
and tamed her in bed

45

They make moments memorable
with quarrels over nothing
reduce relations to relic

46

A woman should complement
not complicate wanting love
and freedom both with sweetness

of the bone in mouth or
frenzied riding high or
grinding pubic regions

giving more and getting more
she must sound like a cologne
not sin or magic bullet

47

Woman is the flesh
and spirit of poetry
eternal love thirst

growing younger as
one grows older day by day
perfecting the body

48

An undressed woman
is a form to lay bare
the vulnerable
in myriad colours:
live sensuous delicious
like true sex exposing
naked truths through body
peep into ever
growing consciousness

49

Not with physical eyes
not in sleep or dream
nor in madness or in
hidden place or peace
but in imageless state
beyond human self
with eyes of the spirit
when symbols one sees
visions are seen as grace

50

The split in cypress
is vulva I know the roots
purush-prakriti

call it Yin and Yang
our basic sex, *lingam* and
yoni harmonize

like lotus rising
from the depths of lake through mud
crossing existence

51

The fig of life with
roots above and branches below:
man and woman one

52

Dragons play whirlwind
among the clouds meet and rain
unite earth and sky

53

The mount of venus
rises above the mars
and unites on my palm
like a horse and elephant

54

Like a woman's mind
resides between her thighs joy
and satisfaction

man's love and hatred
concentrate on the crevice
though he watches face

she laughs when I say
love and beauty is nothing
but sabre and sheath

55

In the lake of your eyes
I saw him drowning
but, who was the fisher
that netted him out?

56

In the forest of your hair
my finger searches
the little pearl of blood
that stirs the hidden waters
and contains my restlessness

57

I smell my boneless
semen under the pillow
weaving legends in

half-dream along her
hips as I curl like rainbow
dying winds splash down blots

58

The remains of morning
like the remaining work stare:
my pen is cold to words

in bed I keep with her
wondering what I'd haul in our
burning, sleek, empty sex

now mind's dried with dry hive
I can't create with bald head:
sky showers ashes of rose

59

The highwayman lies
to rob a moon with skull
whipping up valour:

she unzips her skirt
like the silkworm undoing
its yellow cocoon

60

My hand
held out in the dark
remained empty:

none reached it
to give joy of
the meeting hands

61

I don't know when or how cracks grew for love to fall through
but memory wanes obstinately:
her thoughts recur even after the emptiness of
the sky blares and I can't hide numbness of the year
before Bulli but her coming to me
just to revive those moments of togetherness
in lovely valley turns cold and apathetic
sun rushes in home and sudden silence
is all that echoes in new year's handshake with me

62

She won't understand
and force him yeah
always after hours
wishes of death and
shouts and blames
would ache his anger
in the testicles and
again she would tame
her man in bed
not knowing
what he has become

63

A meanest moment
of eternity it was
when I was conceived

after 40 years
I see same degeneration
my mother saw first

empty of poetry
stoic, dull and diffident:
always puny game

with triple fury
winds return and put out light
what use watching god?

64

Before it heals or
scars merge with time's endlessness
morning brings new wounds

is there a release
from unloving life day by day
breathing heartless air?

65

Everything is falling apart
every wall is cracking
I too am breaking

to be someone and to belong
drink in love like many
secured sure happy

I too want to live and be loved
not piece by piece, friends
but, will they let me?

66

After the day's blaring
hymns and mantras loudspeakers
and tribal drums and dance

to please the lion goddess
in roadside Puja pandals
there reigns frigid silence

67

No one sings these days
songs don't come easily
life has lost music

68

Giant smoke from the factory
mates with perfumed *dhoopam*
rising from the trucks carrying Durga
in the afternoon Subarnarekha
is crowded with idols and people
absorb shocks with reverence
suffer dust, mud and stench

69

Who is a gentleman here
everyone speaks more
than one tongue in self-interest
ditch everyone or
turn disinterested
in excuse curse everyone
or say it's bad luck

70

The glow of victory
is deceptive coming from
frail man's needs and tears

midnight sighing of poor
deprived of the tree of wealth
bare body, dry land

where is light and grace
in ravished image of struggle
midst mute mass and doubts?

71

Death in silence speaks
moonlight cleaves to the body
peace gropes for poems

72

In flames rise voices
of futility and dreams
in dust fear and love

73

Time is running out
cracks in walls develop fast
but I stay static

shrouded in cobweb
as if in dusk denying death
brooding slipped chances

74

Can't I grab a little
warmth, fresh air and love
simple, sound and innocent?

I'm fed up playing
life across the net
shuttling nightmare in cold

75

The moon rises with
million stars in sky
but none worship

the dying sun says
how alone one is
sinking in glory

76

What good will happen
waiting to leach through old layers
no use stay put here:

the leaves have turned moth
we cross-leg with crabbed wishes
erase one more year

5.

I DO NOT QUESTION

1990-1994

1

I do not question the sun
adding wings to wounded giants
or depressing them to crouch down
the memory's lanes or erect
new walls with odours of hate
and love cagily crumpling
the shade between earth and sky

I do not question the moon
skirting the cherished wishes
on dreamy edges of winter
unforcing climax with sticky
fingers splintering sensations
or skittish little riddles
frosting the heart at fifty

I love light without ashes
of wood or fuming desires
in the morass of frustration
I sing psalms people understand
through lines on palms or relics
of private rains after lunch
I live time shaking sun and moon

2

I don't fear death
nor do I worry about
life-after-death

but I fear I know
what life has been and could be
without fortuity

of birth and continuance
of our failure to
undo what we ourselves do

3

We do not know the weeds
that grow in bed with flowers
staring like weary cops
unmindful of birds at dusk

the more they know legends
the worse it becomes to live:

let's clean the sky of tales
of covenants and prophets
and be at peace with earth's
bushes and weeds and flowers

4

Moon-bleached ashes of age
riot in the night
there is no smoke

my diffidence rises as snake
in dream meanders
the dragon's tail

my teeth nibble at the garbage
near the mango tree
I stand like the tin

on rusted roots morning
flares up will to live
beyond breedy space

5

Strayed far from the nest
I'm fed up living with dust
for years fleeting shade

bereft
of melody
of spirit I sink to
the hades of utter loss
I can't

reckon hidden mysteries
I have lost the sea
for a mere cupful

void of patience and
peace now as I touch the breasts
of the field I crave

for a pure breath
native to
my being I search
sweet savours

of love

I seek the roots that shape
 my desperate cries, my bones
 that ache in bed I image
 the snakes in forgotten heritage
 to weave delight with Baha'i mind
 and prayers in English before Kali
 stand out alone with psalms
 or Tablet of Ahmad, perhaps
 I cross-breed in soul

but, who hears or sees
 the ancient hands that signed
 the first poems for man?
 I sound strange, and strange I am
 rooting about among ventricles
 for my anonymity with names

The rain-smoothed walls of Shivalay
 shine in sun like the gravelled path
 now slick with wet mud and cow-dung
 obscure footmarks of Monday-worshippers:
 I forget the sutras today and feel
 the damp incense inside like I did
 standing in the empty sentry-box
 compromising with the rusted letterbox
 not opened for years at the left turn
 the mime of hope and worship and slow effacement
 of illegible signatures on deity's back
 don't help me flesh my verses or mitigate
 pounding rains, rituals and repetitions

8

It's too much to live
amid the lies made to keep
the wheel moving:

now knee deep it's better
we seek shelter in the hush
of sky or the charred

ocean floor leaping
to still the cries of ghosts
that were children once

death is no wound nor
cracks inside any solace:
lies of living lock

the footprints in drifts
in wildness fossilize
word and connections

9

One may or may not justify
one's romance with lethargy:

to understand what lies beyond
rainbow or under the tree shade

one must leave much for another
day or season, or mood or dream

and leisurely sketch happiness
with dapple of light and darkness

10

It's a slow awakening
of winter like my drugged eyes
--coalfield's gift for bread
no use making up myths—
and search for fire eastward
silent burst of orange
and mynahs in twos and threes
hopping to catch their preys
--all a drama of exile
and no thrill—I live out
my life on the edge, denounce
and metamorphose into a moon
under cloud-cover, rising
sliding ritually in bed swallow
humiliations, arrogance and ridicule
to escape whores in the street
and AC rooms while days
wheel by in their polished world
I negotiate a price for the next day's sun

11

If you see light
after the day's end
you can hope here
life is still left

glow-worms still fly
to greet the evening star
in open sky

behind the fighter planes
there's still a Cross
ready to shower love

12

Living their smallness
in a small world they have ceased
to grow and be human

life has lost meaning:
I can't be comfortable
with their bragging ego

corrupt to the core
they eat into our fabric:
I must search my own way

through empty cups and alleys
in body rain love
or plant new peonies

13

They close their eyes
or shut them with rupees
matters little

but I worry
when with sight in their hands
they free shadows

of legless men
who denude files in sun
and smell a beast

freedom to act
means freedom to harm as
silence stinks louder

than protest noises
lumped in chaos or monologue
quickened for a quid?

**Why should I suffer
their smallness if they move in
carpeted corridors**

**and sit in AC rooms
to do the very things they
hate to follow themselves**

**with privileges
in the name of rules order
not to leave station**

**without prior permission:
it's virtual house arrest
for the sin of bread**

**I must resurrect
symbols of authority
and take off afresh**

**to find new haven
and set the bait to scratch fact
beyond their fiction**

15

It's no use testing blood
for asthmatic wheezing

dust of alienness
has thickened on my throat

patches in the x-ray
reveal I'm still foreign

I don't expect kind words
in my own country

my heart lacerates:
I cough wordless complaints

16

The hot humid morning
like the night
constricts
breathing pipe:

clouds concentrate
but rains need time
to fall

we must wait
till the share scam
is smoked out
and resources
restored

17

I seek you
in the grammar of silence

I seek you
in the accent of love

stretch your living hand once
I'll kiss death out of flesh

18

Moonlight lingers
on mango boughs like the fruit
sweet yellow sun

in my courtyard
cool shade travels with thin cloud
I see love dance

in the sky silk
silence measures new cup
brimful of joy

19

When the sun is erotic
and the moon lyric
the winds turn tempestuous

in the orbit of love
legs slide by calls of pleasure
for life to continue

20

Time floated in our echoes
and love carved our destiny
day in and day out together
we've sailed to cross continents
of body fate and psyche
sleeping in the same bed, but
isn't it disappointing we
haven't seen the same dreams together?

21

The hospitality
of a brief transcendence
you lead me to
while at the top
I feel the imperious sway
is a memory:
I must wander into
your body's forays
before I drift down
into the slums of sleep

22

Anxious about the next morning's
soothing sun, security and peace
when I fail to sleep I seek
solace in her soft moist thighs
and pray to God to bless my passion
for a moment let me forget
the cares of a crazy world

23

Rains revive memories
shattering emotions
in solitude

I stick my neck out
but the oracle is immune
the shell no longer saves

24

How soon the rain loses exuberance
leaving the walls damp and faces sullen
aches of all sorts and onset of asthma
allergies that make moments miserable
in Sawan furious changes occur
each year I wonder it's degeneration
or burial of warmth in watery smell?

25

She sees
many faults in me
points out all I shouldn't do
even hates my hugs and kisses
in bed

yet life
rolls on mocking
compromise of living:
to keep home she conceals within
our angst

26

The original place
where the olive rested once
now stinks with dried blood

a famine of love
in menopausal silence:
erection can't create

27

Ripe on the branches
mangoes fall one by one
end of the season

they pull the blind
to peel their image
in mirror it limps skyward

28

The rains
cry to meet earth
fall from sky day and night
remind love always yields to arms
open

29

Desert storm
by night
turns lusty:
close combats
canons, rockets
inflatable
tanks and dollies
mobile launchers
phallic missiles
go off

boys jog
in women's tents
ejaculate
continue sorties
commanders promise
no penalties

30

She wonders why so much passion
and heat and intensity in bed
each night why so much love-making
why such blind delight in sex
even after fifteen years
why such urgency and excitement
at forty-three and two children
to sense spring between the thighs

as if I've nothing to prove
beyond maleness or neural itch

ever hungry for love and
its fulfilment in giving
I seek her spirit through body
rise to heaven together
and forget demeaning aloneness

31

The steep ways of love
grow eyes on palm rocked in
whirling melody

in the fragrance of her breath
blooms the bud of joy
I gather the fruits

flickers of peace hide
god in heart like running brook
love in nudity

she gives me of herself
each day and night fulfils in me
God smiles in her eyes

love waves rise and fall
between our shores of soul
we drink each other's sea

32

I seek new strides
in each of your moves
new dreams in your eyes and thighs

nude lyrics in lips
shape the night's sway
set my heart afire

I seek the lingering fragrance
the rhythm that frenzies the soul
the timeless joy you conceal

I seek the hues that blaze being
and shade the nest I rest in:
your chains renew freedom

each time I look at you
I see natural woman
the fount of poetry

33

Exploring the self
lost in the mind and the world
to know the unknown

sex is a search for
joys of making in poetry
bliss in creation

performing on tip
of grass the dance of Shiva
finale of love

34

We had a pact
we'd drink together
after the children retire:
the night dawned we couldn't
sit to make moments
memorable and condemned
love to argument
over nothing

35

While we were talking about
love, marriage and migraine
she kept fiddling with

her reticule—opening
putting her pen in and out
and shutting again

36

Standing at the edge
I long to float with waves and
wave with instant wind:

on the dream water's breast
I read tomorrow's wonder:
the secret of waking

37

The leaves
fall and rust with
ashes heaped up by wind
in the lawn rises the pale earth
for breath

I hear trees
ticking and
April heat pass
leaf by leaf

38

(i)

Time stands still
in November chill
I fill emptiness
with words paint seasons
on your face

(ii)

In my impatience
I werdle or opup more
they take their own time
here waiting is more awful
than meeting and going

(iii)

I thought I'd exchange
my anxieties for a bit
of peace but thinking
was easier than happening:
I couldn't even sleep

39

In the art of living
let's not look for perfection
but give wildness a chance
for the garden *to be*:

colours of error reflect
depths of desire that seed
the thought before action

40

Is it the love of ritual
or the ritual waste:
every year they steal light
to illumine *puja pandals*
and blare non-stop nasty songs
the whole night disturb peace
show power at its lowest
but the goddess keeps mum
perhaps self-loathingly
sleeps for demons to write histories
not fit for the light of day
or for me. Self-pity
is no wisdom when I yield
to pressure and visit
places I hate
I'm sorry my goddess and I
stare in two directions:
who cares for the burning
in my heart now
night frustrates like day
with the ashes of insight
I create verses
and learn to rest restlessly
coughing, sitting or
sniffing her crotch like a dog
but nothing ceases
in the air only wounded
senses and high decibel
noise nobody feels
I touch her and yet
she doesn't respond to my need

41

They are not so much
schemers as blunderers
blinded by politics
of convenience
religiously guard
against encroachment
on their privileges
as leaders create
a new elitism
a new tyranny
of mid-term poll when
prostatectomy
at sixty frightens
them to favour anyone
as in sex giving away
balancing oppositions
despite impulses
for equality
they are trapped by gains
from oneness with top
no use prying secrets
or imprecating
them sotto voce
in public houses
money buys the girls displayed
inside or vicarious
pleasures outside bouncers
panders and husky men
gyrate when they retreat
with straight pecker
they mar the future
and bury the nation

42

So much is lost
between the day break
and rise of the evening star

and not a soul screams
in this zoo man
is worse in wild nakedness

43

Dusty colonies
recount in grammar of cough
new tales of hazards

near opencast pits
they move with graves on shoulders
mark my white shirt black

44

I am not pocked with grief I think
I have buried all my angst in
the half dry half wet midden
in my backyard for mice and moles
to frisk and buzz and doze when down
in the mouth someone throws
empty cans to rip off moments
of freedom I think about smell
of ripe decay and discards
by wall mottled with pee
as they unscrew betrayal and
smile ingratitude my son shows
the smuts on my trousers and
says I must keep the distance
to feel safe among devils

45

In the chilly deep of this winter
the shifting clouds wave hands

will the day keep all the promises of the dawn?
I see milky blood dripping down their nails

there is nothing save the spirals of smoke
midst the swelling dreams rocked by waltzing sun

my thirst for sleep and rest is reduced
to orgiastic pain melting down

into the sea of barren academics
I search the red tears shed on the Cross

and face a mirage of abject helplessness
as truth carved out of myths between dream and day

46

How long shall I seek freedom in the myths we unmake
licking hairy darkness or feeling sweetness of hips
through untamable wildness of the heart chase images
that abide circles of paroxysm ascending from
the mist and raw voices staring spume in the faces
as each star twinkles uncertainty crossing the moon
what is left to slice out of the passage through red light
except old sorrows ready to leap to the bone?
now there's nothing to hold on to against lies that shade
bondage of nearness and the horizon I couldn't touch

47

I'm not all in mind
body and soul but broken
I look beyond to find

the fire that rages and makes
the whole in me burning:
I seek the ancient hands

that shape eternity
in new forms and renew
the ever alive in me

48

We would be better beings
if we could understand
the worst in us
not to evade
or hide ourselves
from others' gaze
but to remake
words to probe reality
get close to others and know
roots don't grow in cosmetic
void or cries in melody
they need nursing
clear contact like
child and mother
communing reason
and vision like
dream and action

49

Is it the fear
of dying penting up, don't know
I can't resist

restlessness of moth
at light is me:
stains of non-being

I can't relocate
despite dreams and
life dragging on

with quaint wings of
fleshless flies and strange echoes
wincing and cringing

day and night haunt
conceal shy tears
survive surprises

Coal grows golden
each moment in quiet corners
raw wind sings

truant from spirit
in coal culture hollow mind
I turn dying ember

is there a release
from unliving life day by day
breathing heartless air?

sounds turn fainter each day
with graying geometry of hope
I stand a rusted sign

there's something that sustains
us all in a world so perverse
it could be even worse

I've passed one more year
not knowing the song next year
goodbye is too real

6.

ABOVE THE EARTH'S GREEN

1994-1996

1

Poetry is prayer
in life's vicissitude:
a saving grace against
manipulated or
unmanifested odds
overwhelming without
warrant or patterning

2

I do not write the sun, storm or sea
but re-create myself and others
in verses turn time and pluck some stars
to find my way through masked trenches
witness to my sinking into mud
that curves the memories into bias
disgrace dust, sky, wind, and all relations
window of emotions I must chain
to breathe a pure breath without passion
and discover essence of beauty
spring a move towards self harmony
perfection and peace, prelude to nude
enlightenment to carve life in full

3

The faces appearing
and receding in
dark of closed eyes

don't answer why
they aren't winged souls
fading in the sun

I emptied before it set
in the gowns of girls
stopped from dancing barefoot:

they shake autumn in the rain
mist blurs the image
water spills in shady pool

4

This chilly night
she folds her arms and legs
resting her head
upon the knees and sits
as an island

5

Ghosts rise to mate
in moonlight tear the tombs
frighten with fingers
rhino horns rock the centre
granite sensation

6

Shadows
spring from night
whispering darkness
fog the streetlight
and I walk
alone

against wind
unseen and unheard
glide
into dreams
create circles
of longings

or spin wheels
of miracles
with blind faith
drug genes and
drone out psalms
in void

7

He flashed a faint smile
holding pen between fingers:
God dropped in his mind
enlarging moments
of happiness into life

8

I know a fire burns
the thumb-sized flame
beyond the heart

restlessly I seek
light in shadow
forget the sun

I feel its heat
and see the light
by light itself

9

In the mirror strange eyes
meet mine as if
probing the progress
of my wrinkling heart:
I don't know how to bear
wounds of curiosity

10

Seeking fire in the
furnace of delight I fail
to weld my fragments

into one lasting love:
I act delusive orgasm
to get out of myself

tear dreams in holes
live bit by bit, in pieces
restive as ever

11

The games I couldn't play
the adversaries I made
unliving the sun
in field undoing
the dense air with spray
prove I'm obsolete

in a land of scams
God seems irrelevant and
altruism is preposterous
kind of naivety
or doubletalk they think right
poets are good but foolish

12

I'm dying to connect
myself to your navel love
and feel your heart beat

inside your breast space
cared by blood at your altar
sip life in your flame

13

You were so near yet
I couldn't reach your body:
half-risen sun
I couldn't rise to embrace
half-met eyes
half-said prayer

14

As I repose
in the wrinkles
of her face
I feel her crimson
glow in my eyes
her holy scent
grows inside
a sea of peace
multiplies
in the mind

15

The eruptions and scars remind
how weak we are
fighting ourselves we fight others
disrupt balance
O mother, I fear diseases
born from within

16

We come together to make love
against the wall promise
harvest for no one

17

Will you marry my soul?
or lend me your body?
I've used it to the core
the raiment is tattered now
even ghosts despise it

18

After the night's rumblings
prayers add wings to breezes
morning's serene calmness

19

Again the stone-cool city
frightens the oval existence
downward in black moment
swamps of labour will vanish
in fume I see no prayers:

who can hope to dial new angels
when most have turned Cubist cock
rivalling small spooks underground
tempting vulgar feats with awnings?

The darkening clouds
and shapes of jungle animals
won't disappear with rains
but stay in my eyes
with icy nights waving tails
in dreams or blazing time

the whimpering sun
with diamond tides won't burn the sea
nor obscure miracles
round evening when tired
of sand trapped between toes
I prick the vacuum in soul

I can see through strange tales
winds spin across chessboard
whether playing or watching:
myths of victory weigh heavy
it's better I keep quiet
lest the earth mourn poet's truth

**I don't understand
why dogs defecate at our
gate, lawn and backyard**

**I don't understand
their gossip denouncing me
in corner meetings**

**it's no use throwing
stones or chasing them away
they love smell of earth**

**the bitches' bottom
in season sexcites, they can't
control their passion**

**they are uneasy
in our presence but leave filth
for others to clean**

**let's ignore them
they're dogs and detractors
defecating, barking**

**at the gate, backyard
street corners they have it off
to ease their tension**

**They use my open door
for their invectives
against me:
I keep no accounts
and no bars**

23

In the name of faith
and God
politics fuels bigotry
strips the prophets
corrupts clarity

reasoning ceases
when mind purveys prejudice:
age shuts the door

everybody paves
his own way to the grave

24

For Yitzak Rabin

Duped by the voice of God
and curse of the Rabbi
Amir is satisfied
he killed Rabin with three
lashes of fire for courting
peace with the PLO
ignoring the Torah
and compromising Israel's
honour all over the world

lovers of peace did you hear
“ It hurts, but it's O.K.”

Politics is based
neither on knowledge
nor principles but scams:
irresponsible
power for free money
hawala, gawala and
loots to strip democracy
voters' faith for five years
connive with criminals
raring to patronize
rival systems from within
blur reality with
majority or
minority views
cook facts for convenience
accommodate strange
bedfellows to bamboozle
honest authorities
introduce God and godmen
make religious appeals
pursue hypocrisy
in the name of the common man
serve vested interests
and cry if CBI
nabs or lodges them
in Tihar or blasts
their structures of influence
how tragic now they
whimper mosquitoes bite
and villains threaten

26

**They demolish huts
for encroaching on pavements
but God stands smiling**

**the criminal dies
and his followers extort
sums for *Samadhi***

**raise puja pandal
after Lotus temple deck
Durga and Mandal**

**encroach on public land
without murmur politics
plays its own logic:**

**who can protest when
wolves mate bitches to create
a democratic race?**

27

**Weaving lies and hopes
he exposes his skill
with riddles only
fools himself and prides
in snares of deceptions
buries his own peace**

28

**It's the same old smell
the same old colours I see
in the corridors
of my mind the monotony
of a museum now**

**I must open the doors and
let in new images
before wandering apparitions
clog the lone passage
with hidden dust and make life hell**

29

**How much I cared for tomorrow
saving suffering spoiling today
cursing the sky and wrinkles that
remind how the rains have hollowed
my dreams this morning a-sneezing
I fear again I can't rejoice
the flash of rainbow caress sleep
flowers, butterflies or glow-worms
monsoon dampens walls and spirit
without reprieve it drips from cracks
life's helplessness prolongs lies in
foppish designs and burnished wings**

30

The disorder in my inner world betrays the tension outside:
the anger over fanaticism and loss of ideals, politics and corruption
the degeneration all-round and struggle for survival amidst lying and conniving
and these burdens, death of desires, drugs, orgies, promiscuities
the piggish chaos oozing from the system like an ancient wound
I can't suffer the crises I haven't authored even in thought
I can't endure aches of incompleteness, dark void that sounds aloud
in my sleep I can't see my innocence afflicted by mirror
eating into my soul, ingesting my own body for something
there is neither consolation nor forgiveness, but negation
I'm belittled as man, degraded constantly in fire of inner effigies
or is everyone demeaning with intimate doubts and mutual mockery?

31

The non-revolting bitterness
cross-legs with mute whispers
chokes sensibility

academic frauds breed culture
with erect greed meanness
sweeps bigness with granite

head jeer past wonders and treasures
in sand sink shamelessly
weave new apology

Where education leads to submissiveness, not self-respect
where knowledge and acceptance depend on certificates
where push-out is called drop-out
where repression breeds fear, powerlessness, alienation and marginalization
where dependency, not self-sufficiency, perpetuates with helplessness
where discontentment is the way of life and dignity is decried
where the system blames the victims to preserve status quo
and the stream of reason is lost in narrow divisions
into that ever-widening hell of majority and minority
O my God,
-- let my country not sink in the new century

(with apology to Rabindranath Tagore)

His talk
farting of horse
galloping, leaving track
of every thought and strategy
behind

34

Poetry is pain
for disguise to lift the veil
in this place nothing

can grow no root gets water
eyes only unsee
long weeds I tried to uproot

rage, violence, anguish
restlessness mitigated
with fellow-poets

reflect madness in outside
but nothing changes
maybe nothing will change yet

we dream in silence
willing new poems of pain
or pleasures concealed

35

I stayed at the ghats
so many years couldn't see
sun's calligraphy
shining on the river's breast
now choked with city's garbage

36

**Environmentalists' nude
protest over " US talks
US profits"**

**camouflage love:
food for eyes like good weed they
collapse on body's delta**

37

**He is a solo drum
trying to get his rhythm
against the sputtering rains**

**the mud sticks on trousers
wet and cool it can't sleep
in the thorns of our yard**

**I seek my balance in
yoga-nidra in the closed
room think his thoughts and lies**

**we weave to ensnare spirit
that pricks the balloon we pump
to rise above the earth's green**

38

**Caught between flattery of politics
and democracy of opposition
he turns a militant and kills
both left and right**

Death is the same in every creed
like colour of blood in the living
or dying, though it's only the living
that call death or blood Hindu or
Muslim, engineer disharmony
set history on fire and corrupt
memory with ashes of time
raising new slogans for Babri
and Ramjanmabhoomi in Ayodhya
the cracked riverbed will unlive
winded metaphors of distrust
and reveal how man has cheated man
trying to hang wraiths of primal word

Staring in the midnight blank
I hear the lungs' whisperings
that conspire with secret draughts:
August's damp eyes gaze down
the walls that clamp breathing
on bended knees I wonder
if each day must be wintered
for the sin of surviving

41

**‘Amidst so much grief
and helplessness love is God’s
grace to hope and live’**

**‘Alright, I can forget
gaudy icons, pervert godheads
and crudities in hills**

**even suffer rebirth
if you can ensure
a decent death’**

42

**I am a stranger
to things so familiar:**

**the city stares at
my identity and asks
why the sun rose through
enamel stripping traffic
while dusty pavements
croon new tunes against shadows
orchestrating fears
cries and griefs few bother for
convenience stay
unredeeming or
unredeemable?**

**I am no heir
to their kindness
nor can live their faith
through cracks skillfully made
for immortality**

**they may know me well
when the sky clears
after the rains**

43

**Pseudos, shams, crooks and
politicians pervert:
empowered by their**

**own corruption swing
hard to keep the ball in play:
impact gives out clue**

**sometimes sweep the ground
and sometimes get swept with scams
CBI unearths:**

**their head moves ahead
unreal their rhetoric
pull up if you can**

44

**It rained the whole night
current went off this morning
sky is clear again
it's hot and humid
without water tensions rise
there is no release**

45

Accursed I stay
awake counting minutes

hours nights and days
breathing pollutants in

bed courtyard rooms
none care for my nightmarish

remembrance of
doctor devil and god

alone I suffer sins
I didn't commit

now unembraced she turns
her back pressing

pillow between the thighs
curls no apology

46

In my sleeplessness
I fear the dark killing dreams
and burying hours
I couldn't save for tomorrow:
gloom glitters with sun

47

Let's know
dirty water
kills everyone no need
to blame only her if he too
is wrong

48

Age shakes confidence
in sex he wonders is urge
to penetrate all

or undoing of
single man in aloneness
unmask tyranny

49

The menopausal man
doesn't know whether
it is love or
pressure of the groin

he preaches
heteropromiscuity
searching for frolic
as another shield

50

I saw her off and
smelled a snake before it raised
its head in the green

shut the iron gate
in rainy darkness moments
hissed end of summer

51

The eyes fix on her curves
limb by limb mistily
silently yet savagely
perhaps undressing in mind
measuring her depths and
secret love standing up
with stressed nipples calling
to unhook the blouse, her skirt
and feel the wild magic
a woman *is* more unsafe
with man than dog in the street

**Vision
to understand
the final whole of un-
discovered specifics before
making**

**shaping
true reality
hidden in outer world
intricately patterned like
body**

Woman
is the measure
of all things: body, truth
love, spirit, God, society, peace
and man

after
circumcision
ritual of sex with
two to four women tradition
offers

new risks
in Timor or
Egypt where religious
rites circumcise woman denying
love joy

freedom
to discuss sex
is basic to prevent
promiscuous violence against
women

let's see
ourselves in them
linking our happiness
to theirs cease dehumanizing
God's gift

54

Her dream-cervix opens
in pain slowly expands:
a red poem

55

It needs less than a drop to procreate
but months and years of readiness to enjoy
sex sustains both life and art

56

A woman
in poet's vision
howsoever strange
is ever new:

pierce like diamond
or thread like pearl
to weld in her depth
her nudity

I love for
all her mystery
perfect poetry
beyond the sky

57

**Last night I woke up
to respond to the door bell
murmuring God's name**

**when I unbolted
found none but a passing soul
stopped for a moment**

**on it's knees peeking
into its own clasped hands
gazing white silence**

58

**Except the naked
no one talks about cold wind
whisper through window
skin-to-skin with chill echoes
burial in icy bed**

59

**It's fun
to fill the pockets with sand
and sit on waves for a while
watch the grains dancing
in delight as it empties
drifting body-mind current
in pure acceptance
celebrating triumph
at crest**

60

Trapped in hope, O God
how unhappy we remain
for a little happiness

from the Cross we seek
joys of living in fear
dusk winds up last rays

61

Sin is soluble
in poetry and craft melts
ice cream cone or bone

white in sun sweet risk
refreshing senses tingling
reign raging passion

62

Life's comic spring
would have turned tragic
but for the grace of
love and poesy

63

The sudden chill
and the heat inside
how to keep silence?
she can feel my fever
I know nothing of seasons:
when the light goes off
blue shadows dance
feel dumb ache and
stale smell of vests
I hear the wind sour
once again viral
infections nudge August
bring in uncertainties

64

Living by forgetting
has kept me from asylum
all these years burdensome
memories buried
in time I kept feeding on
bodies lit with love
forgotten lyrics
I wrote mysticalities
created to conceal
my follies including
acts of lust in the morning
or seeing off guests
I never invited
now under no pressure
to know what happens around
I feel free and enjoy
their music of villainies
and taunts uttered to mourn
my rise they couldn't check:
I forget curses, my gains
lost in wind of time

65

He watches a film
on prohibition opening
a fresh bottle and
smiles at his wife's threat
to smash the bottle
like the Nellore activists
protesting against
arrack sales and auctions
quietly I switch off
gobble the drink and retire

66

The naked tree
seems to sway
in hope of
green waves
spring promises

here am I
prostituting smile
in mirror
despite change
in season's eye

I remain
so restless in rest
mind ceases to think
eyes lose sleep
and dreams disappear

I remain
unaware of my worth
losing confidence I see
quiet death of my urges
my elements shaken

in the vacuum of silence
my senses mock at the muck
I've piled up all these years
now fear
the walls are crumbling

I wish to escape
the chain that clothes
the freedom of love
and privacy without shame
let me feast in naked earth

68

Each one has his eyes
on the trunk snapped in storm now
lying on quiet onion beds

seeks the bark for medicine
or wants me to gift
the log for furniture while

one tells me the price
of sesame and flatters how
lucky I am to

have so many trees
in the compound they bruit how
I hide the wood to season

69

The earth is tonsured
and the rains stopped paving way
for the hay fever

once again the grass
will witness history in red
blue white and yellow

across the road dusts
rise and spin new allergies:
spiders in the throat

70

Nobody hears
the vacuum
mourning peace:

echo haunts my soul

like leafless trees
raising grief
to sick air

71

Each time I am stuck up
doing or thinking something

not knowing what to do next
or losing trust in the self

my own notions, my world view
I look for someone to talk things over

or sit still for hours or minutes
turn pages of a book to get

the right idea, the rare insight
fume, fumble, fail, and do autopsy

decode messages on corpse of ideas
and lo! the world changes in a second

To rain is natural
but their silence
to leaking roofs
and non-supply of light
is unnatural like
my aching limbs
and sneezes when
it's romantic outside

age fails or love
is scarce these days
to image emptiness
as truth in verse
is wasting words

abusing vision for
concealment of
sun and wind that
couldn't be part of system

73

Philosophy frightens me
confounds obscurity
with profundity:

asking north of the North Pole
or time before big bang
is absurd to me

I don't reflect time and space
or probe metaphysics
to construct Everest

I love to climb the peak and
search the best route without
high minded debate

that affronts simplicity
symmetry, nudity
a poet's beauty

74

The mind is put off
before the act blood lets down:
it's end before beginning

how can touch be erotic
with 'cold copulars'
in drunken gibberish?

they all chant their own
equations through grooves of night
trick weeds of ideas

life's strange relation:
words belong to all
but deeds to a few

75

**So ordinary
has become my living**

**sudden with complaints
depressing challenges
and death of desires
shaping dream-images
once when moon or sex
caused no allergy and
breathing was deep**

**my mind and eyes display
blankness as I wait**

**sleepless again tonight
in this room spinning
webs of non-consciousness
praying, suffering and
forgetting with new sun**

76

**They all want car, furniture
decoration pieces
latest fashion designs
jewellery and plenty
of money to self-express**

**misplaced priorities
evoke new tensions in
mid age I converse with
the ceiling off my chump
who bothers about love or prayers**

It's not that I can't afford
a few rupees on rickshaw
or buy a car or scooter
but I want to remain glued
to the earth, to dust, with my weight
I walk alone: the grocery
or vegetable slinging
over my shoulder, as it did
forty years ago I think
I can still walk distances
without shame, sweat with dignity
let all that say aha now
know I'm different from them all

let them be measured by
the money they stash between
their legs or dreams they stretch
I'd love to be weighed by my acts
my labour that hurt none
and tomorrow when I'll be
too old to stand alone or
walk by myself I'll recall
I had my feet rooted in earth
and known them all who offered
their hands without heart:
they needn't curse if no one
bothered them after the fall

78

I'm true in my element
begotten of earth
hungry to mate with sky:

seek me in song of songs
in kisses that he and she
rehearse on way to bed

the voluptuous squeezes
fulfillment of godly
and bodily promises

79

Cloaked in chill
gracious corona
winked at earth

I saw a spark on
my finger she turned
diamond ring

80

Drugs don't diagnose so
let's kiss our sneezes
into each other and stop
worrying about repression
necessary or surplus

81

There is a bay in
each of us depression mounts
to cause hurricane

crumbling caged life and
its traps submerged in rising
water and wind pipes

pressure in silence
unweave years of network
roots of upturned faces

82

He laughs at the lone star
gazing his tail upward
from the potato pit:
I thought the dews were tears
fallen before mourning

83

Falling leaves like hair
from my head and chest don't hide
strains of memory

shrinking, melting flesh
swelling voids efflux ageing
earliness missing

84

When she stretches her legs for me
to shave the pubic hair we hit
the hay together remembering
the first night I gave her nothing
in my hurry to see her nude

85

She props the stooping lemons
with stake but avoids
bending close to me:

I die to draw the blossom
in my twining arms
but she likes the other scent

86

**Stones carved to dance and
music come alive figures
ever sensuous**

**pride in what we hide
our cultural memory
they excelled revealing**

87

**I seek in sex
freedom of nature**

**metaphor of veils
that hide body
spirit as two**

**and celebrate
pristine purity
of Prakriti
reach ecstasy**

88

**After a hurried
love making we drift to sleep:
our backs to each other**

89

**The rains leave soils soft
the seeds sprout with the first sun
I love pearly dews**

90

**Trucks on G.T. Road:
invasion of the body
for a quick release**

91

**She's still rolling but
yield is poor I can't invest:
her low love sensex**

92

A clean compound
morning to afternoon
playground parrot sound

93

He survives in bones
brittle like hers in forties
it's winter again

94

Roots are infected
no water can green balsam
the pot is flower's grave

95

Stealthy invaders
chill surge of river and dreams:
the year waves goodbye

96

It will be New Year
after a few breaths new hopes
burial of dreams
seen or unseen seconds go
sour and uncelebrated

97

I need no colour to put on
nor to dip my pen in gold

I don't ride on wind to reach the top
nor like to scrawl failing forms

I love rebel rays coming in
shatter narrow illusions

moon is the poem in sky
silence sounds in brevity

98

Inconveniences mount
so high I can't surmount
sit static over wishes
without strength pose I'm strong
sthitprajna and wait for more
opportune time to move

99

**I am my own proof:
I don't need my neighbour's wings
to vindicate my flight**

100

**Silence is
mantra in action
beginning
divinity's descent
and change in
inner being
enkindling
love hope and faith**

7.

THE FACE IN ALL SEASONS

1995-2000

1

**I'm no river
flowing toward the sea:
I must find my way
asking strangers in strange places
sensing soul, using insight**

2

**The blank space between words
is the burnt skin of time
I couldn't paint:
they stole the colours
and brush of the eyes**

3

**There is no mirror to reflect the soul
except the acts one performs and motives
that guide utterances or gifts given
to remember the last dance which test fear
and sincerity in aloneness it pricks
one admits or brushes aside love shines
the face in all seasons in each land
the self binds with its own light mirrors soul**

4

I don't know how to negotiate the long steep trail
with hidden scorpions under loose rocks
at home with human muck in a valley existence
strolling upward through a thicket of TV images
politics of glory, garbage and god
the odd arts of money, hierarchy and control
nobody knows who unmakes whom

I don't know how to follow the ridges
back to the trail and the dead river
but stand for a moment to rub the sand from my feet
before worrying about the lost vitality and fear
of the approaching night and rising smoke
dissolving in the sky or conspiring with elements
hardly in balance but contorting the psyche

I don't know what is there for me to hope
when the rains rejuvenate and flood both
the repulsive stench and the loss of pathways
linger longer than the flavour of the first drops
under the tree the puddle feeds no sparrows
but algae that couldn't dry now trap tiny souls
that fail to swell with heaven's breath

5

Concealing mourning
in twilight gaze he explores
the shaping nightmares:
colours of the rainbow guard
the beasts at the day's entrance

6

They all walk with wounded feet seeking remedies
remain disturbed bargaining small pleasures in smallness
taint sun and moon and leap backward calling others turds
surrender to creatures created in impulse
unhealed, dance alone making moments more scary

7

Looking for Taj in grains
through sand-storm find history
trapped between the toes

bleeding fingers draw
new domes of betrayal in
windy matrices

8

Nobody bothers beheading women and children
with chainsaw in the name of God
Algerians torch their own *watan*
while in Zaire barbarians mull
sex of God and angels and soldiers loot
whatever they can to prolong war
like the Talibans who must spread
their values and shun truce for power
in the name of God turn the clock backward
imposing ordeals of all sorts
next door political fanatics
in the name of social justice
close eyes to sadhus killing housewives
teachers raping girls in classroom
and hoodlums burning women in slums

9

Their rites of burning
incense, camphor, aloes, musk
match nuptial baptism
by sprinkling burnt nail parings
three eyelashes, seven head
hairs, seven pubic hairs
on her viands while he gets
the fare of crushed lion-
penises, cock's testicles
and goat sperm to deflower maid
with or without mantra
or sacrifice at altar
can't ensure Shiva's
virility uniting
all the elements through earth
nor liberate the first
night in bed elaborate
genital enthusiasm
overflowing love
tender interlude?

10

The traps hidden in the candle flame
are the cages we make and unmake
to chart the future and yet fear
the emergency light at night
dream the concerns of slinky colleagues
and how to police their freedom
against owls, monkeys and bandicoots
that howl at each move to the lee
and yet pretend our poses intact
through several byways reach victory stand
breath by breath conspire against ourselves
only to hear the echoes that rise
or die down in silence the twangs
of memory reveal the pit
dug over the year or the earth
fermented with imaginary gains

11

With sweat dripping down his legs he stands
under the *gulmohur* waits for the sun
to be less cruel at noon even
his shadow seethes in hot wind he thinks how
he'll cross the whole bridge with dust blowing
over him every time a truck or car
passes by ridiculing his being
and the drying river oozing more sand
than promises of water to drink when
clouds burst in a month washing away
his shanty and all save memories

12

Telling lies as truth at my door
they plant innocent graves
and taint their tongues with messiah's blood:
they all aspire to godhood without cross
who can redeem their acts:

I'm no god or godfather to sacrifice
sun, spring, moon, morning breeze or rain
nor any gods of love visit my house
but it grieves to see so many martyrs
awaiting resurrection the short way

13

The city shouts at anonymous strangers
seeking sojourn against puzzling hedgehog
and expectant past sticking future with choked
geniuses unable to flush their own muck
but embarrassed by lunar dust fallen from
nowhere stories prop to trigger riots all around
known and unknown faces bleed alike and they
bury histories or blame informers hired
to spread myths for non-payment cause shame to their
own kins and their own land turn epiphytic

14

The morning in Banaras
along the Ganges
is no longer fresh:

smell of urine
dried and fresh excrement
merge with smoke, sweat and
stench of the rotting river

with eyes closed or open
it's only the sight of
sexless genitals
or half-burnt bodies
that incite no *nirvana*

now infested with viruses
unknown to the city
dharma is eaten
by vultures in the streets

and the river awaits new birth
dream brokers promise
in convulsion of lust

15

A crow
picking sperms from his mouth
to feed anger
of an unwed mother
gang raped in the temple
dumb deity couldn't father
the broken lives

16

Seven times he moves
round the vermillion god
under the *peepal*
sprinkling water to escape
the malefic Saturn

17

Preaching Hinduism
they've lost God for politics:
pull down churches

shed crocodile tears
killing the priest they kill truth:
pseudo seculars

18

Naked children crowd
as I pass through the alleys
between smelly slums:
dogs bark to alert them to
the presence of a stranger

19

Wild flowers everywhere:
out of the cracks in the cement
and plastic-covered tin roofs—
drains demarcate their spread

no matter uprooted
again and again they've nowhere
else to grow in a city
sinking under its own weight

20

More wintry shades
with sudden end of the sun:
the roof leaks again

unmasking the match
clouds play with the dying each day:
piles of frozen heads

21

Their loose tattle
or loitering on the street
changes nothing
not even the hand they wave
to penetrate the body

surging like a wave
they image in the air and
end up wriggling worms
hiding through the thick hedges
digging the dark undergrowth

22

He couldn't change his caste
so he changed the religion
yet they didn't change
nor could his small world:

the jackals, foxes and crows
couldn't comfort the unease
of enlightenment with sky
as a coverlet for gods

the cage still pursues
in search of a bird and he
fights his battle alone
in hope of the sun

23

It hurts to see my country die
slowly and steadily after
50 years of self-rule
many look back to the late '40s
even now it smoulders
may burst into flame
it hardly matters
the new rulers are blind
to common man asking
a fair share and honest rule
everywhere obscenities stare
I worry my country is dying
with too little democracy
too much Hindu and Muslim
too much rich and poor

24

The site readied for
another test on the sea--
a Hiroshima

in the name of peace
politics of dominance
poisoning the poor

25

A slice of my sex
forcibly cut
I can't void the fear
nor explain
what it means
to be homeless
in my own home

26

Even if I looked
at her between *Naked Lunch*
and invigilation
I couldn't compose a poem
on sweat drenching her breasts

27

The lone fish
unmoving at the bottom
meditates

depth of the pond
height of the sun
or length of my shadow

I can't stand
the heat and look for
the boudoir

28

The painted paper-god and Christ on the cross
stand on the dawn-coloured wall of my bedroom
watching sex, prayers and restlessness each night

29

Stretched between son and daughter
the mother has no time
to sleep with husband:
crying alone in pain after
midnight peeking out at stars

30

The heat inside will
reduce with the flow of blood
and cactus may bloom
in desert of flesh again
the heart may feel the green wave

31

Taken out of me
the bone of my bones
I grow into her and be

each night discard the covers
seeking each other
return to the ancient nest

32

I wake up
with longings of night
memories

of love melting
dropping between
secret images

becoming
still-born poems
at midnight

redefine
her feminine hold
in lonely sun

33

The smile you weave splits the sun
I lose my direction in clouds
that cover the banks darkening
the white of the lake moon kissed

34

Sifting days
from the past 50 years
we two reveal
secrets to each other
unshared over a drink

35

The nude reads his skin peeling eyes
and curses the crumbled canvas
the wrinkling hands couldn't set:
she suffers naked burial
for simple art in crudities

36

They descend from the ship
anchored on her navel
to paint sexact on thighs
and flowers and vines on breasts
before sailing backward
tattooed a *lingam*
devouring the sea

37

She thinks a tight bra
makes her look younger:
my touch pains the breasts
I seek to caress each night
she puts me off saying
I've ruined her figure
authored wrinkles and marks
on the thighs and belly
with my lust made her
suffer back and knee ache
et cetera, et cetera
and avoids those long kisses
that turn her on during
the periods challenging
my testosterone level
for a flush of relief
tonight she unhooks
whispering the season's end

38

She complains
I've dropped her from my album
fragmented memories

I wonder how to
fill the space between corners
with fresh images

39

Her eyes wash the kitchenware
and the fridge painted last year
there's no water but stains
impatient as ever
even whispers annoy

she wipes vermilion
over-dusted in alcove
incense unuttered prayers
the goddess smiles her blessings
a hand splits the sun's layers

40

Raja Rao rightly said
“ Women, all women, speak poetry
whether they are talking of
houses or aluminum vessels....”

My wife said this morning
Sudha gave birth to a girl-child
as she ate tamarind too much

the other day when I said
she's still a raving beauty
she smiled: “There's life in the old bag yet”

41

Wrapped in colours they wave the full moon
sipping tea in kitty party whisper
fresh rumours to share in bed or confound

fellow seekers in mushroom field next
morning curse the sun for rising early
end of mossy dreams dripping new puffballs

42

To mark or conceal
his identity he leaves
the fleshly signature on night
and blames the sun after years

mulching between bites and laughter
he boasts he's his own person--
no maso or horny-- but

he's no different in restroom
if she doesn't mind it between
peasoup, pee and staple of breasts

43

Grapes, gin, lime-cordial
and poetry of semen stars:
it's a changed cocktail

before lunch to kill love or
touch the heart to change
the snake into bird

44

Unable to clean
the cobweb of years he eats
the passover meal
but forgets to wash the feet:
now drinks good friday prayers

45

Swallowing capsules
he trusts in absent healing
seeks intercessions
to cure allergic asthma
and the cyst not contracting

46

It is not the form
or disposition alone
but the expression of thought
and the movement of body
that make her dear
to a man of art
whose love nature multiplies
each time he seeks her congress
with worries of an age
and ejaculates pleasure

47

Sharing darkness is more real
than action on the screen
we stay unfocussed in a corner:

whisper the lose *lingam* on stone ring
in the old temple and pink and grey
laughter, shafts of sunlight, rain and
muddy rubbles, squeezing, curling arms
scanning inside, sensing voiceless changes
again plan for the day after two hours

the same old thoughts and never-ending acts
keep flowing like the stream through stones learn
the tongues water speaks in clutteredly

48

I miss the sensuality of night
in icy bed the noisy breathing
holds no hope: there's no drug to hoodwink
time that's ever young or climactic

now the needle stabs each time I try
to sew the earth and sky or the waves
crashing on the belly that was truth

the seeds have dried inside no rains
can revive the lost world or create
anew I can't hook fish with changed
position can't push invaders

riding the chill to seek meaning
in chaos hurt depth of fluid bones
that could become magic warmth of sun

49

I don't know the constitution that happens
but the makeup matters: they see her novelty
or measure her from the bra over the top

I see the rain take off her underwear outside
the trousers that challenge liberty and pride:
she curls around to hide what she wears inside

and reveals much more, her flame and fragmented being
the day's fabric in frail linen, dying night and
an absence: I see the colour change to cover

to make distances from the moral remains
and shadows of lowing cows in dried pasture
mate with throbbing dreams that look for space in the eyes

50

I kept waiting for some stranger
to come and execute one last miracle

my hair grayed but no one came

I couldn't push time locked in my room

51

A fear always lurks
shapes into nightmares
through sleeplessness image

loss of love haunting
since birth shadows chase
featureless but squeamish

now hard to make out
watery squiggles
swimming across the shore

52

I don't like to get lost in the crowd
or remain a non-entity feeling low
in my own eyes even if my host
is too high to shake hands with I know
he won't remember my name or face
after reception he'll go west and I'll
turn homeward with numb feet in shame perhaps
cursing myself for smallness or shrunk
before fawning connections and banal shows

53

Life doesn't end with joys
of a day or two: it's long
long time of living

ups and downs and forgetting
the happy and unhappy
in a short span and ageing

with memories that become
self in action, our karma
moulding the life to come

54

In the stillness of morning
hangs fog like smoke veils
her waiting in street

I watch my window
wavering shadow
announcing death of a song

55

Where will I reach running
with gluey feet on gashed earth
a relentless sun licks
leftover or a dying day

56.

I wasted my life
weaving it into hopes
that could never become
love or faith: now coping with
signs of degeneration

there's no magic wand
to bring back the lost years
-- howsoever unhappy--
the dreams of living were true:
even now I seek freedom

of a wider world
eloped with reality
I couldn't change with wishes:
the destiny shackles
and anonymity shrouds

57.

I couldn't find a charismatic guru
so made the idol one and looked at the red face
any time I needed help and guidance

in the silence of my restless mind searched for love
and life's purpose my ersatz faith couldn't give:
the professional spirituals enraged the soul

as I ran into the cave to come out
of darkness tricksters encircled the exit steps
I could feel the shadows spreading their wings

my heart trembled at the shock of the ringing bell
now I fear opening my eyes to the sun
no iron hands could hold to burn the years' garbage

58.

How long can I grow without roots
or make way for what is approaching
in digital noises I can't be
inheritor of arrant cowards
smelling the arse on their fingers

nor can I be the priest checking
the burnt tongues to test criminals
stiff with cold I'm tired of animal
struggle for survival and last rites
in candle light digging cursed
treasure for night songs others croon

I can't decipher names in smoke
nor forget the faces emerging
from the matrix of tremors
that are islands to shackle
feet in silence close the cycle
of the waters that feed the sea

I feel the lumps hinder and pain
now it's time to break off and bury
the ash in the earth and plant afresh
foliage for rains or sun to nurse
a destiny I could take pride in

59.

My years upon me
keep me from finding myself

in joys of love-making
under a grove of trees

or walking down to the stream
for a swim together:

the valley in grey brown
is now a burden

I must throw off before
the woes of collapse

60.

I want to burn the fallen leaves
but fear the flame will hurt the trees

I can't stand the stench rains bring
the backyard is too big to clean

I can't rescue my habitat
nor trim the trees for better light

this all reflects the shambles made
for disco of convenience

why regret burial by
taunting helplessness now?

61.

**The earth won't wait for my dust
nor the sky hold rains till I descend
and someone places a stone**

**to remind how I couldn't live
my wild ambition and destiny
couldn't leap to being I was not**

62.

**I wish I had the freedom
to breathe a moment more or less
but I live my ignorance
each moment challenging myself**

**it's no spiritual claptrap
but a blind can't lead the blinds:
my poems without body can't
breathe the spirit I want to feel**

63.

I watch a poem of silence
in stone her dignity
preserved like the eternal Taj

I remember the white tomb of love
I stood before and prayed
for his grace when aloneness pierced

the soul in search of mate
intricate patterns appear
and fade challenging mind

we need a new key to the myth
not spoken but felt in
moments flapping between the hearts

64.

I seek images for
my wordless experiences
in loneliness commune
for meaning in the world
lessen lonesomeness
for a moment and again
suffer the same angst
and frustration of failure
in haiku silence

65.

The poet doesn't know
when words become poetry
or what he intends to say
he just says what he says
knitting together thoughts
ideas, feelings and
memories into a form
which looks good at the first glance
creating more meanings
in readers' consciousness
that each one sees different sense
denying complete absorption
yet thrilling the spirit
so much that they read it
again and again and be
one with the poet

66.

Frazzled at the day's end
when I smell her flesh
she curses my knots

and the two decades
of living the same routine
in kitchen and bed

and nowhere to go
in shameless convenience
I release my tensions:

she kicks my image
in the little pool of blood
and buries sex

67.

What is this world
with PCs, internet, e-com
robots and cloning

the moon and mars
remain lifeless as here without
roads, power and house

they dream I T
satellites, aerospace and
silence cries for water

honest bread and peace
the hungry billions seek
no hi-tech slavery

the global cheats promote
liberal economy
stealthily purvey

rights and environment
with politics of control
doom the future

68.

They die of mother's milk and
passions that flow in post-
modernist exterior
it's the same nature in
a handsomer disguise
the unchanging inside:
sewing up the slashed sleeves
we are where we were, or
as Cowper said, an ancient
in a different dress

69.

Her site spurts changes
hands plead for a little more
space to feel presence

map out the concealed parts
rehearse performances
again and again

70.

Raising each child--
a test of patience, learning
each day to live
and smile her innocence
through aching arms and shoulders

8.

SEXLESS SOLITUDE

2000-2008

1

It's all linked but I don't understand
or don't want to understand because

I am too much with me and worry
about her dying libido and my

own shrinking sex amidst salsa chill
Bihu fever, Vishu rituals

ringing emptiness day and night shake
the age-wrapped youth for single-edge play

in forked flame carve image of heaven
to challenge the jealous God undo

sins of races flowing in my blood:
I love Him through the bodies He made

but they don't understand redemption
in churning and parting of the sea

they don't rejoice the flames of henna
on her palms nor let the lily bloom

in the valleys use the clefts and cliffs
to deface beauty and spike voices

don't condemn me if I am not white
the water still flows in my river

2

My window opens
to the back of a garage
where guards make water

at times show their dick
to the maid in my kitchen:
they care for none

how can I complain
if boys and girls make love
in the bush between

the children's park and
my backyard? They are distanced
by a barbed wire fence

3

Goes awry
the electrical circuit
in the brain cells

in my drugged sleep
I utter expletives
unmindful of

the victims:
I can't help my sensory
overload

4

Sweating desire
inhales new sketches
with mind's pen

on the pillow
image by image
night passes

not knowing
how a hazy sun
rose from the sea

5

Unlinked to the trees
he doesn't know his family
stands aloof, questions

ancestors don't change
the mood of the weather:
the leaf reads his name

6

**He is amazed to see
so much corruption
in the system
of world peace:**

**his colleagues envious
of his foreign jaunt
with the UN
and earnings**

**in dollars, rise so soon
in career and
have the best of
life and style**

**while I worry about
freedom in Congo
untamed humans
safe sojourn**

7

The day is shorter
the night longer
and yet sleepless

suffer the dark
in the air in bed
I listen to roar

or whisper of
wingless worries
no high poetry

but nightmares trimming
the sun and the sky
that could never be

8

The stinking waking hours
turn into solid abuses
in the abyss of head
after midnight the drugged
holes of the mind tear off
the veils I never wore

they are naturally disturbed:
turn sleepless to discover
the stupid sophistry
of a poet-professor
unable to redress
his inner balances

and yet posing stronger smashing
the academia that care
a tuppence for native
geniuses that unmake
the imported mates who
dovetail media to flourish

9

Again and again
I find myself on bed
my sacred space
but can't relax
meditate or dream

now fail to have
what I always had
her naked company
with tingling laugh
slurred with passion

can't celebrate yoni
deep into silence
renewed released returning
without finality
again and again

10

Human Rights activists
discuss eradication
of manual scavenging
and construction of
wet latrines in villages
in the conference room
complain about poor flushing
in NHRC toilet
and routinely censure
the junior staff
before seeking provisions
for rehabilitating
liberated scavengers

11

I wish my room too
had a window opening
to the sun and moon
and not to the windows
that remain always closed

perhaps with people
meditating their ego
in dark light and air
switched on or off against
the resounding echoes

**They pour sand in my hair
and fill my shoes with stones
to make me heavy**

**like many I too grab
the grass and try to float
but my fingers slip**

**they refuse my pleas for
a rope or staff to help
me drift in currents**

**they wish me to become
with facial epitaph
my own tombstone**

I can't understand
their mystic heaven or thrills
housed in awareness

time's intricacies
or sources of plastic mist
through mythical depths

the wings of my thought
are too short to climb God's height
or blue deeps of peace

I stand on the edge
of earth's physicality
waiting on the brink

with shadowy lines
and curves to image march of
eyeless Jagannath

if nobody sees
the collapse of procession
and the dark precinct

don't blame the poets:
there is too much emptiness
and gloom to ignore

14

Each death has a passage
to surprise the dead
awareness matters

no solace the cow's tail
in the river's midst
heaven, far, too far

15

Tall houses appear
to grow like trees from the plane
slowly rising high

people turn tiny
with cars water birds and beasts
in the summer flame

nervously worried
watch the moving mass of clouds
from the window

eternal patterns
nature's wonder on the edge
a streak of orange

thousands of lights
twinkle in colours like stars--
seat belt fastened

16

I want the best of life for you
but you too must understand
what I can't do

you must be patient and do
what you can—
I can't create the fruits

I may create space
for you to stand but I can't
become the legs

you must run the race
on your own and be
what you dream

the redness of mars
and the whiteness of moon
merge in you

you have worlds to conquer
and miles to go, my dear

you must rear the goose
and have the gold each day

17

Tracing the corridors
in my mind for the seeds
of misplaced dreams now turned
nightmares drugs can't control
no use mocking meditation
Gods yoga or psychic
mumbo-jumbo to escape
the beasts within nurtured for years
now I fear each move
a suicide bid but dying
is more difficult when
the dead too are restless

18

I read them but my prayers
couldn't be news of tomorrow

nor could the images mean
surfing channels with coffee

at the day's end can't reflect
something positive to take

pride in myself justifying
the age or hours just prolong

the animal existence
prove worse than animals with

smallness of mind and concerns
forgotten like news flashed in

media without vision
glorify the shackles of

darkness bluff God and humans
yet ignite minds with flickers

19

How to weigh the breath
the flame the soul or the ash
the body conceals:
I can't turn my inside out
nor know life's weight when lifeless

between earth and sky
it disappears one with
elements quiet
there's no way to know the thread
or its mechanism that binds

secures life now or
beyond what if I can't feel
the weight of the colour
on the leaves on tree maybe
shrinking into itself

Walking down a long corridor
a beam of light beckons
from a distant window

up ahead a figure
gently motions me to move
further along the passage

a large oak door appears
etched in the stone on the wall
beside the door odd-looking

symbols from unknown alphabets
I try to push the gold latch
on the handle but it doesn't

open a golden key
in the hand shines brightly
in the dark I step out

from inside the window opens
to the sea an enormous yacht
slowly moving towards

a mansion kings occupied
with rare riches and power:
I am promised a new sun

21

Living among the sick
and the sickening what else
shall I carry except
germs and allergens that keep
me tossing and turning
from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m.

perhaps from the day one
I've never slept well and now
I want to sleep without pills
drinks 'zines or sex
thoughtless prayerless in peace

22

Snows all around
for the last seven days
no supplies no planes
the runway all white

surviving on their little store
for the winter in fibre huts
bored they drink more often
and wait for the met bulletin

23

Thrice a day standing
at the kitchen sink she
washes utensils
to save tears and memories
of broken wishes smelling
from the pillow on cracked
linoleum in cubbyhole

24

Feeling safe with shadows
live the flickering images

channels deceptively sell:
remote control in the hand

change tunes for songs my mother
hummed and they choreograph

with girls and guys who play sex
sans taste in cheeky zipouch

25

With prayer's cocktail
live animal existence
and boast, is this all?

in self-same cocoon
fungus of illusions grow
toadstools of damned tract

26

He stares the empty chairs
and sits to chop
a sprouted potato
a wrinkled brinjal
and drying beans
for lonely dinner

27

I hate kneaded flour
it reminds me of semen
in the dark of the palms

it puts me off to smell
sweat from the armpits
the thighs moist with urine

in bed the body is
its own antidote if itched
for love the wasted sex

I hate to meditate
the erotics of bygones
growling with unzipped night

28

Nothing turns me on
in aloneness self-rape
is no eros:
the blue hill hides the seed
in the sex of goddess

I can't awaken
nor can I rise from the ash
to be my real self
I am still lost in meanness
no third eye could locate

29

Ending with lewd joke
with sensation between thighs
his morning discourse
arouses the disciples
to dance in groups groping sex

realize consciousness
through multiple copulation
bliss of heaven
in the evening practise
kundalini meditation

30

Their freedom to choose
keeps them together for love
exchange discourse for *lunghi*
body for liberation
yoga and meditation

in leisure try to find out
who is available for
a fling or contrive meeting
or turn legs to jellied state
or sip tea under the trees

a hypocrisy
of awakening in group
they jump and lie on each other
in the name of *sadhana*
teeter on the edge of ruin

31

Journeying
with no sense of direction
no control over
destiny or destination
I can't take pride in flickers

or flashes on their faces
in the train they come and go
with the same indifference
shadows of distant houses
hills and trees keep passing

Where shall I find my rest?
at the doors of Sheol?
in dust? or in the light
of living? standing still

among the ungodly?
to break the bonds and cast
their cords that divide faith
with flattering tongue

turn a well into the sea
or preach hypocrisy
untouched by fire or air:
o god save me from sin

of calling them sinners
and bless the spirit in
time and me that I feel
your healing touch in thought

and bear without regret
the burdens of the world
loss of love, or even hope
to live like a lotus leaf

I wish I could clean the cobwebs of legends
that veil the vision, moralizing future
with doubtful glories urge us to move backward:

echoes of the dead reverberate; no use
setting the alarm to go off 2010

stashed away in empty slogans life's seconds
periodically exhumed is a travesty
of obsolescence of the sun ever clouded

Gateway of India or Delhi's Circus
suffer midnight lust with rites of consummation
like the conclusion of a tragic poem

Not that the world I see
is different from the world I dreamt
or I forget that I'm part
of my mother who scolded:
in love it's often late
to realize truth through grains
of wheat and petals of blood
here the crooked trees and stones
dictate the length of fire
not extinguished for ages
now awaiting justice
of the earth and its scammed owners

35

I don't seek the stone bowl
Buddha used while here:
she dwells on moon beams

I can see her smiling
with wind-chiselled breast
in sexless solitude

her light is not priced
but gifted to enlighten
the silver-linings

36

It is merely the colour they replace
not the content and make distance
with rickety slogans engulf the waves
that trap tears before dreams revolt

what use lamenting the shipwreck in a void
or braving the moral remains
or the day's frail fabric in a dead world:
no good as a gauze for the sick

or shroud for the dying; their flags deceive all
in the name of independence
they mock the millions with substanceless noise
while funeral dreams haunt my sleep

I hang nobody's picture in my chamber
but see their shadows masturbate
in damp corners or seduce in poppy light
the crooks and righteous alike

**Culture is not repression
but sublimation through expression**

**why do they police
art for lesbianism
homosexuality
naked sex or blasphemy?**

**politics of vandalism
throttles tradition
aggravates baser instincts**

**do they know their metaphors
defy the divine that creates?
destroys the soul, the vision?**

**the future is not their high wind
but the artists' honesty to peep
into the potential hell and
come back with portraits we fear to see**

I don't know which psalms to sing
or which church to go to feel
the flame within for a while

sit or lie still with
faith weather the restlessness
brewing breath by breath

I don't know the god
or goddess or the mantra
to chant when fear overtakes
my being and makes me suffer

plateaus of nightmares
paralyzing spirit to live
and be the promised fulfillment

I see no saviour come
to rescue me when mired
I seek freedom from myself:

my ordeals are mine alone
in the valley of self
I must learn to clear the clouds
soaring high or low

39

**There is no poetry
in the sexually starved
nor redemption**

**they die of sin
and fear the savage in them
trek drying spirit**

**fill the cones with mud
and barricade the roadside:
snows turn giant ice cream**

**their fractured sights
illusion of mystical—
slippery plying**

40

The bulge near the waist
in the blue coat tells
of her hubby's love

the anxiety
on her face tells of
the gap in relationship

the unread letter
and the pearl ear-rings
on the cushion reveal all

the brown-yellow map
under the glass on
the centre-table
fails to predict whereabouts
of her man awaited long

the evening's shade of mystery
couples with emptiness
light fails to hide

41

While they talk about
love affairs and *shariat*
and his wife murmurs
about arriving early
he looks for some
poetically active
faces in the waiting hall

42

The face reveals the mind
or conceals, it's natural
art response – no computer trick—
but gradual revelation
through wrinkles and spots
vision and revision
a total image

43

*To see you naked
is to recall the earth*
says Gracia Lorca

it's no sin to love
strip naked in bed, kitchen
or prayer room

the bodies don't shine
all the time nor passion
wildly overflows

but when we have time
we must remember parts
arouse dead flesh

rub raw with desire
peeling wet layers through light
sound, senses and taste

play the seasons:
the thirst is ever new
and blissful too

to recreate
the body, a temple
and a prayer

44

They all think they're almighty
but don't know doom comes
neither from east nor from west
god raises one or pulls down
for owning estate
for a mere cup now and then:
there's no forever
in the cocoon life that bursts
in the thin air in moments
most unexpected

45

To create is to die:
die to love, to time
to memory, to god
to everything we know
do or experience

it is stillness, to cease
within and without—
no movement but new mind
new energy, new sense
of innocence, freshness

not talked about before
new love rising with
presentness of presence
new sensation, beauty
and bliss of harmony

The *word* is not God
but the mind creates it
after its own image:

the memories of patterns
the illusions and longings
the desires that become truth—

gods gurus and books
overload and hold freedom
to face fear and find

the real reality
untainted by magical
moments that self-limit

within deeper recesses
undo psychic structures
the lusts of ages

and be completely quiet:
grow outside the known, without
thought, without withdrawing

when seeking nothing
experiencing nothing—
stillness becomes divine

47

He thinks he's achieved a feat
seeking security through division
but the fear haunts and thought multiplies
the problem: the gap between

what is and what may be
the itch inside the skin
the memories of love-making
and routine pleasures now nightmare

with chemical change in blood and nerves
licks the tulip in drawing room
and thinks thoughtlessly mindlessly
inflicts more pain to himself

48

Without living
life lost in existing
no use rationalizing

re-incarnation
or resurrection
is an escape

evading the fact
of living in fear
and manipulations

we close all doors
for thoughtless peace
to fight off death

49

Blind
with their own sight
don't see the wonders
round them but kneel
and ask why
only me
too painful to see

50

Shrieking in the sea
my knotted self
the lines on the palms

spiders' network
gleaming with corpses
that have no face

yet their funeral
mirrors the eyes
waving with dying light

51

The body that died
and the body that quivered
with menstruation
is me in dream fear and hope
shake love to light the flame

stir the time static
for decades crippled impulses
fleshed as my daughter
touch the psychic memory:
I re-live bliss through death

52

Her guru reminds
he knows her inside out:
she can overcome
her migranes making love
lying on top of her partner

and himself workshops
with one, two, three devotees
in semi-nude light
to provoke God to orgasm

53

Because you didn't come
I drank alone and killed
several black ants
thinking about you and
my own nightly nemesis

TV no solace
nor the standup comedy
sensex fell further
who cares for me or the spark
you thought I had but who cares

54

The whole night they blare
senseless mantras to arouse
gods and keep mortals
from sleep without caring how
they hurt the old, sick and child

they don't sing praises
with understanding if they knock
the door will open:
love compels descent of divine
in white silence reigns spirit

Crushed between the heart and head
I fail to get along with
my own creation

sinister and righteous
that challenges my being
for not meeting her hopes

I did what I could
but how to produce a mate
for her peace and bliss

she raises her eyebrows
and isolates herself as if
I authored all her griefs

now stripped and alone
with hands over my chest
I stand in the street

await the coffin
to reconcile the truths
I could not conceive

56

I didn't keep the fast
there's no Naw Ruz for me

there's no Holi either
I ceased to be a hindu

long ago christians too
doubted my faith and love

moslems are too rigid
to admit a secular

now alone I watch
the tragedy of colours:

I celebrate difference
and freedom of spirit

but they question my birth
and call me a hypocrite

57

With the taste of bitter coffee
still lingering in my mouth
I gaze through the window
drawing in the harsh smell of water
beating on the crowded green

I remember how dreamily
I floated over her body
in the rains like this

but she won't care
now the storm numbs
and nothing lives save
the clouds that drift and squeeze
pimples on the scrotum

58

Discourse on heaven
and after-life pleasures
is self-bullying
to live without meaning
midst searches for the lost

so inciting is
the hell of cyberworld
they forget to pray
and multiply their pain
corroding consciousness

but it doesn't matter—
whining in sleep or whinging
is part of crazy
nature in race with itself
and god a convenience

59

**I am no Moses receiving
God's message in lightning or thunder**

**none recognize me in the dark
nor can I see any without light**

**the cyst on my neck constantly
reminds me of my ugliness**

**the whitening chest and pubic hair
tell of the death of my potential**

**the earth needs timely spells of rain
and elements saved from human fears**

**I must redraw my dreams and visions
to brave life and the intriguing future**

I am no Jesus
but I can feel the pains
of crucifixion

as a common man
suffer all what he suffered—
play the same refrains

at times cry and pray
hope for better days ahead
despite lack of love

diminishing strength
failures, ennui and blames
for sins I didn't author

I am no Jesus
but I can smell the poison
and smoke in the air

feel for humankind
like him carry the cross
and relive my dreams

I am no Jesus
but I can feel the pains
of crucifixion

61

Burning stones to ashes
and feeling good politicians
idolize criminals and cartoons
with chameleon hues

ritually smuggle power
to perpetuate wanton rut
of intellectual sodomy
crying foul after checkmate

62

We cover our hells with roses
and fear foreigners digging deep
into our glorious projections

the stinky growth from diseased weeds
no gene therapy can erase:
we reflect the chaos as gold

trying to shed the crust of small selves
invite death for a change and lick
the narrow lake between the thighs

it's more voluptuous to float
in the sky and come out transformed
with Kali's blood-dripping light and grace

63

The house may collapse any day
the walls are cracked
the chinks gape at the base
but none care

they maintain dignity
with cosmetic protections
demand patience and practise
duplicity till their own end

in meanness evoke mystery
to quell good sense and concerns
for the future buy silence
of the dons in four walls

64

Cloning miracles
with the night's discharge
in condoms

the political golfers
hit for divinity
in measured pace

take a long suck
to climax with myths
sown in the mud:

write a new history
with gods whose guff promises
a heaven on earth

65

No perfume reduces
the damp watery smell
of the towel hanging
in bathroom

invisible fungi
turn off the scented mood
the see-through image in
the mirror is no moon

and no trick works if one
is allergic to sex:
the unwet reflections lost
in the stringy rain drops

66

She doesn't understand
my icy pain in dark

when she denies
the body doesn't die

there's no seeds for birth
the shell can be broken

I seek to revive
not youth but innocence

67

There's no meaning
in being cold and groan:

silence frightens
between the acts

who cares how much
I care and love

forgetting wrinkles
in the lone pool

dreams shroud the gloom
unburnt in sun

68

There's nothing in my heart
I don't understand
the conspiracy of lines

on the palms dreams about
the face doesn't mirror
the nightmares in sun

getting taller but
I walk over the shadows
that seek identity

69

It was dark before being born:
I love the light after birth
the eden on the earth

I may not know where I go
after living the hard life
but I know the freedom—

get back to what God gave us
in love let life shape anew
from the nude origin

70

Where will we reach
sailing in a coffin

or dreaming to anchor
off the rainbow arch

the gold and purple ashes
won't revive the phoenixes

lost in myths and stories:
we need to recoup

the elements' balance
and create new suns

and moons that could light the cave
and begin a fresh future

I secrete poetry like semen
in consummation leave smuts at times
to reveal the horse they try to hide

in river I see the sky and fish
the stars that stare about from edges
to crack the earth and its blue vaults

that bury life in raptures unfelt
or regret waking dreams as visions
in long tales in shallow colours

in criss-cross of twists they muse scrawling
dead voices that shriek in the wood and
become song of the slogging heart

I'm different; I live in my poems
dressing or undressing like sexact
long or short, in bed or kitchen

I enjoy the self, as much as others
and peep through the façade they raise
to make room for themselves in the sky

I live in me and am happy with
my little images that lift up
the sight and soul and please for a while

my brief thoughts in briefer words deride
the romantic eloquence and mist
they weave in pellucid silence

72

**They may be arbiters of good taste
and denounce my aesthesis or ignore
what I created all these years:**

**there's poetry in failed ejaculation
or cowardice in a woman's company
not all will dare to talk about**

**it's weakness which stares in the face
when truth is wrapped in silence and love
is negotiated in a perfumed bar**

I couldn't make my bedroom church
reading psalms and Lord's prayer

the light of my lamp and
the portion of my cup couldn't

lift my soul mired in passions
and silence of the morning

the confessions couldn't remove
my anguish of ages

nor the tears and cries strengthen
faith, hope and love – the rock

slips the grip for enemies
within don't halt my body

glues to the ground seeking
darkness of the womb and joys

ever restless the child doesn't
grow and the father fails

in verses I can't hide fears
my face I despise, can't find

freedom from the chemicals
sprayed in the air and the smog

oppressing my breath, the sun
fails to keep the covenant

the terrors of death are real
the traps overwhelm, I can't

escape my own creations
the bed, the flesh, and serpents

that seize the house of God
I can't redeem, can't save

the soul in battle with me
in bed I can't sing and praise

74

I always dreamt the world
as one and thought I belonged
but none let me live

my simple soul at home
with differences
they kicked me into exile

for their prejudices
forced me seek my nest
in myself

I share the wisdom
of peace and life in tune
with nature

75

**Some animals are buried
and some rot on the highway
unrecycled by vultures**

**uneaten by worms but run
over by wheels that don't care
the shit—man or animal**

76

**Do they ever see themselves
their truth inside the mirror?**

**sound too much anger and hate
burn humans and homes to teach**

**lessons never learnt but played
the communal card for rights**

**no god granted. Their petty
politics defies silence**

77

**I don't endorse their pact
to squeeze adulation and**

**control faith of the masses
to shed blood and spread darkness:**

**idols may draw crowds to kill
and the spell may not last long**

**the temple doesn't attract me
I want to forget the myth**

**after the fascists owned him
Ram has ceased to be my god**

78

**I don't want to mount
the hardships of the sky
if the earth's labour pain
is false or the action
stillborn with or without
scalpel the doctor
humiliates process
and I hate the crime
of creating god
on the ramp betraying
models too naïve
to be worshipped
for nude belief**

79

The falsity of the sky is more real than the earth's
lies can't sustain hope of divinity

we have complicated with poesy
private hells to mitigate flow of time

that couldn't carve heaven: we harbour histories
of broken promises and fallen gods

lament men and women buried in light
now soulless, bodyless, traceless we look

upward and whittle continents from clouds
hanging generations that may never be

80

With steel flow
the rolling water
pierces the rocks
and shapes them into stars

the sun and the moon fail
to march its sharpness
the wailing of the rocks
turns into river's song

81

Hiding or waiting
it raises its head when least
expected, a snake

glitters in the eyes:
looks for the moment to slip
and reveal the fangs

82

I have no magical power
to change my restlessness
into glory radiating
peace or purpose in living:

they give me no room to better
men or myself but condemn
as one hanged for nothing:
poets are no living lessons

I stand aside ruminating
what I couldn't do or be
or await miracles through
circles and zigzags of the mind

even corrupt faith and curse
destiny for the maze
of my own making and yet say
I know the spirit's upward fire

83

Men or women
no living gods:

the soul has no sex

the form, the body
and the name unreal

the climax of eternity
denudes the mind

84

It's part of prayer
to have the *lingam* kissed
or kiss it to feel

the creator's pulse
for a moment
thank the body too

that houses the spirit
we seek in His name
for relief and salvation

through the cycle
of day and night
meeting and departing

learning and unlearning
each moment synthesizing
god, sex and the world

85

gods sin against God
betray creation
break covenant

Shiva's third eye opened
fire burnt out by Fire

Agni defiled sexact
outraged love in action
sacrileged union

they still peep in privacy
fear fire, question freedom
dictate codes for love

worship lingam
forget Shiva

Life lost in petty worries
is the core worry: I'm diseased
in soul before the devil
reappears I must commit
the act or suffer the bull
for castrating in the dried canal
where some fishy cousins waylay
cowmen with their upthrust bosoms
and make noise too in the half dark
seizing and unseizing slowly
all dreams get buried in sand and grass
now I don't bother the sweetness
of papaya growing taller
between the fence and the drain
or the urchins stealing the fruit
there's no fun in romance with the moon
or flowers at night smells and sounds
of the weather smack of allergies
that cripple the andropausal day
and ice all the gelled machismo
too many are the grudges
and I can't remedy my mind
or body with mystical bids:
it's loaded with emptiness

87

Living in isolation
builds islands

looks at melding shadows
in water

revives hopes of reunion
when stars fall

closes eyes to the tide
weaves a new lie

88

I don't know how
the bones grow in the womb
still in darkness

elements clack
in the small house shudder
the harp and strings

the heartbeats pronounce
the balance of nature
against heat wind rain

look for body's love—
the mystery song echoes
some truths not spoken

89

Walking along the sandy edge
he blames the wind or cloud
and yields to the alchemy
of seasonal allergies

plastic flowers couldn't keep time
moving in his house:

he remains restless
with fears and uncertainties—
grows walls of alienation

suffering images
of strangeness every moment
or sensing shade of a nude
survives their helplessness

90

At the end of the day
when I look back and see
my knowledge and insight
rusting with ageing colleagues
I pity my age and wish
to give up; I can't change
the means and the ends frustrate
the will to work any more

I want to rest now burying
ambitions and achievements
that ache the soul and make
empty sounds in the hollow
of a hallowed pond long doomed
for marrying self-indulgent
elites and idiots
sucking generations

91

What hangs out there
is the effigy of dreams
that couldn't be burnt

to please someone's ego
nor could it be sold
as a piece of art

there's no protest value
after years in the drawing room
it derides memories

92

Each day ends in fear
of one or the other kind:
living in uncertainties
it's life in death

and here they are
setting dreams
and winning votes

their 'proactive politics'
adds to the list of
dead and dying

they may or may not sleep
in high security houses
but it will be too late
by the next election

93

When flowers have dried
who will feed the bees
that hum for honey

or feel the hands
that tend honeycombs
on orange groves

they may meet
to recall
the golden days

and even tune
a new hymn
to dispel the spell

or whatever caused
the hives' burial
in smoky hush

but I know
the bees won't return
to naked trees

94

A Matisse or Picasso
only complicates
the secrecy of your face

I don't understand
you, your body or the nude
even if I touch

hold your hand or sleep with you
sharing long kisses
the mystery of the dark womb

your mind and silence
hardly make up love we seek
squeezing wit and soul

95

Anxieties don't end
with age fire raging to quench
drugs hardly help reach
climax any more and
ecstasy a far cry

without sleep journeying
through dried roses to nightmares
I smell hell all day
suffer shrinking passions
in the hollow of my mind

96

She doesn't know
how silence changes
the dynamics of love
in bed it kills
like the changes
in weather patterns:

I remain sleepless
despite her smell
next to my pillow
holding injured ego
part in the morning
like aliens

97

They colour their hair
paint the face to look younger
and speak aged lies
to match rainbow life but stare
into the sky to find
which colour follows which
before melding into one
they wonder what to do
with beige and indigo shades
that stick their vision

98

What are they
but a promise and fulfillment
in this world
mere sex

and sex
must be venerated
even as a poetic truth
disregarding
the strong urge
or fear so vehement
sometimes
they may look for the deaf and dumb
for relief
on back streets
or beside overhead tanks

what matters
is the spring music
playing about the edges
a flood of memories
through rack and weeds
tending the will
to become a garden
with echoes and silence

99

Beside phone
a chocolate box
and condoms

rising thrill
smell makes body swirl
as bones breathe

100

The sky frightens with lightning and rain
raises neither fire nor quenches the earth

I've lost a chance to create despite ritual
end of the day and her parting with a kiss:

now sulking with a glass in the dark
it's stupid to talk about nirvana

101

I can't change body
can't belittle nature
prophets of doom

can't cross rainbow bridge
nor go to underworld
to reach heaven:

water and mountains
I can't negotiate
with my burdens

burial no end
living is a long game
that goes beyond death

102

The cracks, cobwebs, dusts and spots
in the house reveal how neglected
I have been. The roof and base tell of
the wild growth, the expanding peepals
snakes, scorpions, lizards have free time
round the year it's the deserted look

an extension of my existence
without repair or maintenance for
decades their apathy disturbs sleep
I suffer scars and sparks, burn my skin
measure my shadow at different hours
yet I couldn't become the skeleton

I watch the earthworms on the corpses
that swell stomach of headless mummies
or lie dormant to kill the spirit
the elements, ochre moon, sun, tongues—
the Buddha's fan fails to renew faith
I can't redeem my karmic credit

Dusk is doomed
when I shovel light
in darkness

fail to live
the intensity
of prayer

moistened eyes
draw me near divine
for a while

soul is light
and flowers and wings
furl in moon

but soon pain
overwhelms my space
and tears swell

fingers feel
decaying fireflies
in lamplight

voice turns blue
I scare my vision
there's no grace

It doesn't end even if I abandon desire:
non-suffering is no key to nirvana

in the maze of unloving the past and passions
and novel delusions of mind and fears

the itch and sensations, growing degeneration
of island existence in dimming light

life only freezes; the foul of stagnant pool—
yet the hope of lotus rises with sun

If my world couldn't be
what I had thought in my teens
I can't help. I was
dependent on my father

a self-made man against
the currents I couldn't read
the sky and its stronghold

the prints of the Ganga's sand
have faded like the rainbow
in a spray of years
that prick like pebbles

now the caries, cavities
cyst and myopia haunt
and sexual anxieties
disturb sleep and dreamless nights

the hairs on my balding head
mirror the laughter
I have ceased to take note of

I have ceased to peel
the ugly shapes, the cunning
and treacherous I work with

resent my identity
and the future I fail
spinning influences

yet I'm sure when I stopped
it won't be all that bad:
my vision would still be good
I would still smell fresh air

106

Ageing he thinks of
the ashes and the long trip
ahead in spirit

feels the earth he would
become celebrating life
as good as ever

107

It's near but
every place has a distance
and people too

they flee to see
me in their vicinity
sense a danger

I don't belong:
they curse me for what I'm not
self-made misery

traps them to hell
I can't help their doom nor stop
their wanton rage

down to smallness
they hate only themselves and
sculpt new sorrows

I must erase
the debris of dreams they leave
and be at peace

108

I stopped having dreams
she doesn't visit me in my sleep

there's no love making
nor the night of her first meeting

time seems to collapse
I can't breathe for two any more

with forced libido
I can't sense beyond the body

the rain on the jetty
resounds a wisp of memory

109

There's little to sustain the past
looking beautiful each day

as we bury it or review
over a drink with strangers

who don't know and would forget soon
but we are our own judge

no one learns from others
and it hardly helps to teach

9.

THE RIVER RETURNS

TANKA

1.

She hears the voice
of unrealized bliss in
the coos of koel
at the window sill this evening
rains love and delight

2.

His message to meet
at moonrise among the flowers
sparkles a secret
on her smiling face passion
glows with charming fervour

3.

She is no moon yet
she drifts like the moon, takes care
of him from the sky—
meets him for a short, waxing
leaves him for a long, waning

4.

Before going to bed
she looks too sad to have
any sweet dream:
the lonely lamp glints no love
and no star peeks through the curtains

5.

Yearning to meet him
she turns a silk-worm spinning
love-silk in cold night—
stands in a shade melting tears
like a candle, drop by drop

6.

Stains of dried dewy
tears on the eyelids tell of
the load on her mind:
clothed in spring the willow twigs
reveal the changed relation

7.

Locked in the shadows
of unrolled curtains her love
in the lone boudoir:
she plays tunes on the guitar
flowers fade at the windows

8.

She senses all things
changing as she passes through
the city again:
should I leave the old house or
lie in the grave before death

9.

Twisting tassels
round her finger fears coming
of night in bed:
octopus grips the body
and buckles into disgrace

10.

At the river
she folds her arms and legs
resting her head
upon the knees and sits
as an island

11.

Is it her quietus
that she roars in herself
like a sea
waves upon waves
leaps upon herself?

12.

The wind lifts
her curved nudity hidden
in the water curtain:
I touch the strings that whisper
love in each falling drop

13.

Gods couldn't change the rhythm
of the body and its needs:
erotic scars stick—
after three decades love waves
tense the flesh and rock the night

14.

When the sun is erotic
and the moon lyric
the winds turn tempestuous
in the orbit of love
legs slide by calls of nature

15.

You and I alive
in cold winter night feeling
warmth of your body
through erect nipples
after days of abstinence

16.

Before the foamy
water could sting her vulva
a jelly fish passed
through the crotch making her shy—
the sea whispered a new song

17.

Swirling spiral
of her skirt spills tides of dream
and memory:
I breathe fire in the dance
forgetting bends and twists

18.

When I wanted to change
seats my friend said she can
only if the door's locked
the light out and her mom
in another city

19.

Life limits between
whence the sun rises and where
it goes to relax:
joys of a fleeting moment
I see Aditi in your eyes

20.

When I have no home
I seek refuge in the cage
of your heart and close
my eyes to see with your nipples
the tree that cared to save from sun

21.

The smile you weave splits
the sun I lose my direction
in clouds that cover
the banks darkening the white
of the lake moon kissed

22.

Drinking evening star
blue green patterns before eyes
no meditation
no god visits to forgive
the sinning soul in solitude

23.

Exhausted she sleeps
unaware of my presence
this warm night carefree
I croon my spring song alone
and fill the void with new dreams

24.

As I repose in
the wrinkles of her face
I feel her crimson
glow in my eyes her holy
scent inside a sea of peace

25.

The room has her
presence every minute
I feel she speaks
in my deep
silently

26.

Love is the efflux
from her body spreading
parabolic hue—
enlightens the self I merge
in her glowing presence

27.

Looking at her face
for the glint of her nose-pin
or rise of renku
they couldn't finish but form
in their eyes together

28.

Your vacant eyes
reveal this city:
dim, humid, absent-minded
orchestrating bronchial noises
'quake in the face

29.

Living in dust smoke
and white darkness I know
I just flicker—
stand alone like a lighthouse
lost in the fog of seashore

30.

Afternoon
dancing on the waves—
receding sea
then a lashing roaring wall
of water, returning sea

31.

What should I do
about the mornings
that couldn't be:
now fog controls
appearance of the sun

32.

Breathing pipe choked
with coloured dust celebrate
spring in coalfield:
the moon mocks my nightly plight
I look for the inhaler

33.

The chilly wind blows
to freeze my feet and fingers
tonight I can't rise
and silence the whisperings
storming the vacant room

34.

A moment of love
and long silence for years:
from dream to nightmare
again fear grips my soul
I sense her presence around

35.

I lost my sleep
over a thought I could not
make my own:
the sun's antidote changed
the voice of the wind

36.

Watching the waves
with him she makes an angle
in contemplation:
green weed and white foam break
on the beach with falling mood

37.

Crazy these people
don't know how to go
down with the swirl and
up with the whirl but
play in the raging water

38.

They couldn't hide the moon
in water or boat but now
fish moonlight from sky:
I watch their wisdom and smile
why I lent my rod and bait

39.

A cloud-eagle
curves to the haze
in the west
skimming the sail
on soundless sea

40.

Digging sand
with her little toes
the toddler
in thin sun awaits
her mom from the sea

41.

I thought I'd exchange
my anxieties for a bit
of peace but thinking
was easier than happening:
I couldn't even sleep

42.

Standing at the edge
I long to float with waves and
wave with instant wind:
on the dream water's breast
I read tomorrow's wonder

43.

My hand held out
in the dark remained empty:
no one reached it
to give joy of
the meeting hands

44.

The thought is sin
she thinks and denies me sex
to protest against
my mind in the gutter
that breeds erotics in verse

45.

The truth of our
togetherness is more real
when we lie filling
our body with each other
silencing sensation

46.

I fear the demons
rising from my body
at midnight crowding
the mind and leading the soul
to deeper darkness

47.

Sleeps the night with
desires wrapped in blanket—
spring in the eyes
gods couldn't change the rhythm
of the body and its needs

48.

Awake in dream time
he looks for the candle—
love's invitation
lighting up in the dark
and sings the body's song

49.

Whirling and giggling
with livelier partners
in the pool breathless
I can't keep pace with her
swim my way to the bank

50.

The sleep is buried
in sex for diversion
yoga or prayers:
the dawn preserves bitter eyes
in the day's bleak passage

51.

An insomniac
weak with desires and prayers
hears the heartbeats
rising fast with dark hours
survives one more nightmare

52.

The chilly twilight—
tossing leaves and branches
tell of the wind
before sunrise she and I
cross-legged, cling to each other

53.

He watches the mound
of dead leaves in the backyard
to grow dreams after
the end of summer and drought:
rains nurture seeds birds buried

54.

Muttering Tablet
of Ahmad in TV noise
he lies on the sofa
by window seeking
post-lunch nap for change

55.

Bored with politics
and news of falling sensex
he folds the paper
and flips through the old PLAYBOYs
to see the nudes seen in youth

56.

She receives my call
complaining why I didn't go
to see my father
while he says it's alright
only gums bleed and joints ache

57.

Gentle like a dove
love was graceful a night away
on the white wave it's
a sea searching ways leaps to
eternity tonight

58.

The bamboo garden
we picnicked and made love in
is now all concrete—
managing environment
and pollution control

59.

The power goes off
suddenly summer heat chokes
in bed sleepless she turns
undoing a hook or two
of her tight bra

60.

Wish I could kiss her
for letting me hear
the angels' whispering
new moon rises in Libra
promising love and money

61.

Greeting the first rains
after months of soaring heat
the lone rose flutters
little petals to the ground
echoing our first embrace

62.

After days of rain
it seems summer again
sweating all day
now without light at night
many thoughts drift like clouds

63.

Shining on rose leaves
silken layer of dew drops:
gloss of her mauve smile
she blushes when I tell her
beauty of the blooming rose

64.

Roses await
sun and wind to clear
the baleful fog:
I fear she'll say no
to my love again

65.

I'm no romantic
turning sufferings to bliss
and delude in
heavenly meeting with god
or life's grandeur and greatness

66.

I'm human and feel
their meanness every moment
get angry and lose
my sleep as the earth writhes in
the pain butcher's knives inflict

67.

There's little save
poetry and prayer
to put up with
rising darkness in and out
and god too is silent

68.

Couldn't be happy with
my present nor could realize
any dreams all these years—
there's nothing to look back
to say I lived my life well

69.

The chart predicts
I must keep the company
of the righteous
but how to find one among
the wicked that write our fate

70.

**Psalms or no psalms
workers of iniquity
shoot their arrows
with praising lips and god
flees to see their shrewd schemes**

71.

**Recedes into self:
crooked trees and leaking roofs—
the city conspires
swarmed with listless spirits
young and living, slowly dying**

72.

**Hiding or waiting
it raises its head when least
expected, a snake
glitters in the eyes, looks for
the moment to reveal fangs**

73.

**Crudity
of the stone conceals
grace of nudity
the image of Kali
reveals to her devotee**

74.

The sun
on a mountain
grave illumines the path
to divinity unrealized
in soul

75.

With steel flow
the rolling water
pierces the rocks
shapes them into stars
turned into river's song

76.

She visits
a beauty parlour
to erase wrinkles
and returns with the same
wintry darkness

77.

Hanging pictures
in bedroom and living room
the young couple
please each other's eyes leaving
box of books for downstairs den

78.

The lips in her eyes
and long hours in the mouth—
no moist secret
between us to reveal:
now our backs to each other

79.

All her predictions
could come true had I paid her
the fees for her writing
psychic reflections on dreams
I failed to realize in life

80.

Wrinkles on the skin
remind me of time's passage
year by year traveled
long distances renewing
spirit and waving good bye

81.

At the river-front
in-drawn with Buddha's image
in padmāsana
eyes half-closed, meditating
his eyes not yet opened

82.

Stray fungi grow
on the broken window frames
beside my bed
watery smell swells as if
a corpse in the river

83.

Feeling the difference
between a tin house and
a weather proof tent:
on the Yamuna's bank
Kumbh deluge to wash sins

84.

His first winter—
recalls swirling snowflakes
at Chaluka
inside the fibrehut
warmth of blue waves surging

85.

With black and white marks
and nest of ants on its skin
the tree grows taller
shining through the geometry
of sun, moon and halogen

86.

My voice
brown like autumn
crushed in noises I can't
understand days pass in colours
buried

87.

The sea smells
from far off leaps to the sky
I drive through
the maze of returning folks
with fresh catch on their head

88.

The sun couldn't help
nor fish protest:
river has no sex
so it dried up
trapped in its own banks

89.

I couldn't understand
what's Hindu about having
fish and onion
after prayers by the river
in the temple courtyard

90.

**Fears to see
his own image in
her eyes so
avoids seeing her again
betrays his cowardice**

91.

**They watch her bare back
to feel the body through crotch
thank engraving pen
she loves the etching on skin
to enhance nudity**

92.

**Peeling the orange
with manicured fingers
she slits the rind from
top to bottom, separates
each section with artistry**

93.

**Dancing on
the car top a girl
holds the mike
to express her love
twists the audience**

94.

Slung-jawed awake
two grinning skeletons sit
bolt upright in bed
hear the shrieks next door but
too scared to call the police

95.

The nightly ghosts crowd
my mind's passage to forge
gods' names in disguise
I fail to scan the face
of thought and life in the dark

96.

The chill outside
deprives me of the bright moon
I breathe in my fears:
asthmatic bouts haunt and
jealousy itches the throat

97.

Night's prisoned friends
keep me awake with planes
flying over the ashram
every now and then I watch
the directions matter

98.

Unmindful of her
body's joy the ascetic
absorbed in vision
or communion with muse
I feel the ripples of fire

99.

One thousand miles
travelling together
in tense silence
he and she contemplate
the next round of duel

100.

I can't cement cracks
nor save the frames from collapse:
the wreck reveals the myth
I need not knit new dreams
if truth's so cold and stingy

101.

The yellowing patch
on the lawn won't green with
pesticides—
the water infects the roots
even if I am drying up here

102.

Each night speaks to me
in flatulence, wheezing
and pain in the legs:
god intervenes at times
in momentary union

103.

**With years of rubbish
he reeks of aborted dreams
lives a stagnant pool
cut off from the running source
rots in the marsh like a frog**

104.

**They own little earth
and seek to auction the sky:
excel by default
god too becomes a party
to their flight with wax wings**

105.

**Lying all day
with pain in the heels
and sinking heart
I read tanka and wait
for miracle to sleep**

106.

**Burning without warmth
one more hot and sweaty spell
of summer, restless
down with stroke, without light, fan
exhausted, alone in bed**

107.

**Ageing he thinks of
the ashes and the long trip
ahead in spirit
feels the earth he would
become celebrating life**

108.

**New leaves welcome
his shadow near the window
the telephone rings
perhaps to greet Naw Ruz:
I didn't pray or keep the fast**

109.

**Like tramps and dogs
they piss and shit I see
I'm sucked in my own cracks:
now curl and cry
but none bother**

110.

**With moral twists
name of god or religion
they fly planes to bomb
sheep of his pasture and
expect grace for humankind**

111.

**Preaching peace
explode 'plane bomb, car bomb
human bomb
and bluff the living corpses
with politics of terror**

112.

**They claim to kill satan
mass murder innocents
and blow themselves up:
I wonder how god condones
vague prophets and their cult**

113.

**From the border rings
he's stationed dangerously:
any moment war
may break out for their follies
he must kill and live...to kill**

114.

**No cakes or cookies
to celebrate my birthday
this New Year's eve
lunar eclipse and blue moon
cheer the cup in foggy chill**

115.

**Vibration of thought
with their venom in groups
my spirit disturbed
I lose desire to live here
conceal my angst in tanka**

116.

Their loose tattle
or loitering on the street
changes nothing
not even the hand they wave
to penetrate the body

117.

Surging like a wave
they image in the air and
end up wriggling worms
hiding through the thick hedges
digging the dark undergrowth

118.

Is it the water
or sweat flowing from the cleft
they queue up to drink?
not far away the masons cut
rocks to build a new highway

119.

The sun of knowledge
shining through the beer bottle
under the *neem* tree:
carousing, singing in praise
of gods and ghosts that never drank

120.

He takes out the letter
and writes a poem on its back
recalling the last words
winds whispered through the stars
that still shine in the sky

121.

Waving arms of trees
conspire with overcast day
to drench again
the two of us look for shade
under leaking umbrella

122.

Over the dried moss
rains have grown new layers
making the path more
slippery for all of us
falling is a postscript now

123.

Laden with new shoots
the trees promise mangoes
to celebrate summer:
the dust-storm and rain shatter
all hopes hanging by snapped wire

124.

Waiting for the remains
of sacrifice vultures
on the temple tree
stink with humans and goddess
on the river's bank

125.

Awaiting the wave
that'll wash away empty hours
and endless longing
in this dead silence at sea
I pull down chunks of sky

126.

Two moons
so far away
yet so near
like rain landing gently
on my open arms

127.

Unknowable
the soul's pursuit hidden
by its own works:
the spirit's thirst, the strife
the restless silence, too much

128.

Conveying
the inexpressible
her lines and curves:
she acts in plots of pain
the dumb sense of silence

129.

Brooding condemning
things not done and unable
to undo he prays
ceaselessly fails to stop
now compelled to make a choice

130.

Try to sense her
in a moment that
she's never been
I walk with light in hand
how will she know it's me?

131.

My legs
heavy with pain
don't move:
sit still, await
someone to lift

132.

When I roll within
veins crackle like dried wood
breathing is oppressed
I can't leave the four walls
to survive midnight attack

133.

Leisurely
the birds keep talking
beyond midnight
hot humid summer
keeps me sleepless too

134.

It is for their love
of God they play loud music
or chant His name on
loudspeakers but it kills my
peace the whole night I can't sleep

135.

Couldn't sleep all night
darkness of thought spread over
the mind with closed eyes
I negotiate fear
of missing the train and loss

136.

She is so upset
with my repressed anger
she doesn't sleep with me
and questions too why I take
alprax when it doesn't suit me

137.

An insomniac
meditates at night and says:
call no man happy
till you learn how and when
he manages to sleep

138.

Short nights and long days
sleep loss rustles a friction
echoing in bed
the cycle of cravings
over and over again

139.

In his ochre robe
the rebel sanyasin says
he'll drop his ego
like the skin's layers torn off
and starts peeling an orange

140.

Did I kill a snake
or do I pass forked urine
the astrologer asks
to calculate my future
I tell him no and yes

141.

Unable to see
beyond the nose he says
he meditates
and sees vision of Buddha
weeping for us

142.

Resting his chin
on the back of his palms
he stands at
the dusted railing to watch
the planes roar and take off

143.

Silence of birds
and moon so miserly
I feel homesick:
mists, fogs and leaflessness
add to monotony

144.

On the roof top
she waits for her man with
moon cake and lantern:
a flash of silver showers
on the mist-shrouded figure

145.

Rises with
the lingering shadow
of the dream:
the serpent of love
tickles between the thighs

146.

Pie-eyed
from the back door
enters
concealing smell
from his sweetheart

147.

The maid fans
burnt coal and dried twigs fire
to make tea
for her hubby
lying in sun and shouting

148.

Filled with worries
all her dreams in one basket--
runs to catch the train
sand and mud dried on hands
ghost fish biting the lungs

149.

Burns spiders' net with
incense stick in the alcove
paper deity
unmoved by prayers for safe
sojourn in the new city

150.

In their drunken chant
lurks divinity, the joy
let loose in rhythm
roses colour the spirit
drowsily lost and regained

151

It's prayer to sink
into her flesh and bury
myself in her breast
to escape the faithless hands
that never became mother

152.

Seeks music in
love's masturbating keys
at his bed's foot
the breath of God lies forked
like a tongue of briars

153.

The cocktail of drink
drug and meditation--
nightly yelps
tease unshared guilt
the hell of silence

154.

Transparent
in a one-piece dress
she tiptoes
waving from the window
not seeing him leave

155.

I love her undress
the light with eyes that spring
passion with kisses
she leaves her name again
for my breath to pass through

156.

It's not ageing
but eternal delight:
you under me
smooth belly nude necking
slow stroking parting flesh

157.

The beads of sweat
on her breasts do not touch
her years or face
in candle light her shadow
is more restrained than my thought

158.

A mist covers
the valley of her body
leaves memories
like the shiver of cherry
in dreamy January

159.

Watching the moon
in the western horizon
two haiku poets
scratch each other's back and mock
the rest as neophytes

160.

Once so intimate
now uncomfortable strangers
smile at each other
in the party no one says
my name even once

161.

At the crowded window
implores the clerk to process
his papers but
he ignores, irritates
at the end, abuses

162.

A black dog moves
freely among reporters
lying on the ground
to shoot militants in Taj
resisting the commandos

163.

Amidst trees without fruits
and the rising jungle
flowers a seasonal grace
in colours coexist
with disfiguring autumn

164.

Whatever the rut
they mate without the season
ejaculating
hatred from their mouths and stink—
their cum doesn't turn me on

165.

Covering with soil
their ill will excreted
from the anus at my gate
in the morning even sun
despises villainy

166.

Love runs awry
in the name of Holi
yields to revelry
of colour and sex:
they excuse all excesses

167.

Delayed monsoon
may now come early and quench
earth's thirst with respite
from heat and power cut:
I smell wetness in the air

168.

Fear of rain
and driver's non-arrival
at night spoils
the cool drizzle this evening
can't relish even the drink

169.

No one gives him
what he needs after a day's
hard work in lab—
a lover, a good night's sleep
and it passes again, waiting

170.

Plodding away at
season's conspiracies
life has proved untrue
with God an empty word
and prayers helpless cries

10

EVERY STONE DROP PEBBLE

1.

Eternity
too short to quench
love

2.

He walks down the aisle
looking for the nave
to kneel and slide out

3.

After prolonged heat wave
sky watery explosion
earth lovely doom

4.

Seasonal change viral
suffering, realignment
with doctor's bill

5.

Each morning the sun
shines through window panes, revives
the dream for verses

6.

Smell of *kamini*
in front of my house excites:
hummingbirds mate

7.

She wraps nudity
in sari turns graceful:
love-touch in colour

8.

Each stone, drop, pebble
waste of life in worldly self:
haiku nothingness

9.

After the red
the dog, the girl
knotted double face

10.

In the darkness of backyard
he searches his shadow:
summer clouds overhang

11.

I stir the water
to pierce clouds in it:
throw memory stones

12.

He has no wind-rope
to tie waves in the net:
sand melts beneath feet

13.

She reads my age in
the synthetic dark of moustache
and whitening chest

14.

Willow summer-sways
its bough half-rests on the pole
light goes off again

15.

Silence is sound in
the blank of unthinking mind
poetry is peace

16.

The child lost in
letters and numbers
spins new designs

17.

She waves a quick smile
from her new *Maruti*--
tyres screech

18.

The sun vanished
in the blue morning couldn't last
the flower's smile

19.

He sees the ape
in the glass self-satisfied
his own image

20.

The blue white dapples
on the canvas seeing
the eye of silence

21.

Sipping gin
he says he loves sex each night
but hates the smell

22.

They are skinny but
skilful, can't be swatted:
their vibrations haunt

23.

He sweeps yellow leaves
or gathers years in a heap
burns to merge with dust

24.

After hours of power-cut
cobwebs in the room
swing in thanks

25.

My bedroom
a maze of cobweb
spiders breed

26.

The red light is on:
they all have secrets to hide
no use peeping in

27.

In nightly silence
glides the airbus through the clouds
trail of white smoke

28.

After sleepless night
a drowsy sun tears
the morning sky

29.

A lamp floating on
river breast in bridal grace
waves in the gloaming

30.

Looking for Taj in grains
through sand storm find history
trapped between toes

31.

Shining from the blade of grass
a drop on earth's breast:
tribute to sun

32.

I know waves that roar
I live through silence of shore:
the sea grows in me

33.

I felt her fingers
the strings of my son's guitar
unplayed for a long time

34.

After hurried
lovmaking we drift to sleep:
our backs to each other

35.

Flickers of peace hide
god in heart like running brook
love in nudity

36.

Monsoon shower
after a long heat wave
monotony breaks

37.

Ripe on the branches
mangoes fall one by one
end of the season

38.

Coal grows golden
each moment in quiet corners
raw wind singes

39.

It hangs like a drop
any moment evaporates
love is gullible

40.

Morning mist rests
on a swathe of pond
lone fish looks for sun

41.

The moon glows and
heat wave all through night scalds leaves
kills butterflies

42.

The mynahs
herald the day clamouring
for moths

43.

Vacating the house
he leaves four decades
no thanks to any

44.

Not age but
years of worries—
his furrowed face

45.

The leaves sway
to fly like birds
free in the sky

46.

Long forgotten
the beginning and the end:
exist in middle

47.

He closes the eyes
expanding inner space
a short-cut tour

48.

Looking lovingly
she bends his head down to hers
twines like a creeper

49.

Unable to change time
my watch doesn't move
moment at will

50.

The rains
wash the paints
that hide the face

51.

The frog in mirror
slips by damp towel
cold sets in sloppy hands

52.

Half-fleshed faces
track from behind the windows
rawness of journey

53.

Falling chalk over head
clouds understanding: eyes itch
and nostrils run

54.

Rains leave soil soft—
seeds sprout with first sun
pearly dawns

55.

Frosted faces
dissolve in stale rain clutching
female body

56.

We lie together
filling our body with
each other's sensation

57.

Celebrating
forgettable memories
at public expense

11.

PEDDLING DREAM

HAIKU

1.

The sky couldn't retain
all of the moon now entering
my house through windows

2.

A star shines bright
beside the crescent moon:
she fakes a smile

3.

Through the small windows
gaze at the moon hid behind
cloud after cloud

4.

Shaking hands
couldn't part with the henna
on her palms

5.

Reluctant to climb
the spiral staircase--
bathing in kitchen

6.

Measures loneliness
sip by sip
at dining table

7.

From the alcove
removes faded flowers
and kills black ants

8.

Thick dust on leaves
unwashed by rains for days--
stagnant time

9.

Oleander and
hibiscus blaze with passion--
making love in sun

10.

Post-lunch nap:
in the drawing room counts
beads of sweat

11.

Two wolves smell
the carcass in field
heat wave chills

12.

Summer vacation:
the noisy roomcooler pricks
my silence

13.

Dust storm this evening--
end of the mango season
without tasting fruit

14.

Throwing stones
at unripe mangoes--
two urchins

15.

Couldn't keep
freshness of leaf
in water

16.

The first rains coming
back from the desert home--
plateau souvenir

17.

One more empty day
but in the mailbox a hint
of hope tomorrow

18.

Where shall I keep
the thirty years junk if
I go elsewhere?

19.

A sad soul
under the mango--
my husband

20.

Ending
the night's long journey
her short story

21.

**Patterns of hair
block the flow:
flood in bathroom**

22.

**Cooking smoke waves
to the afternoon sun:
ruddy backyard**

23.

**Chilly night
no soul on the road
guard at gate**

24.

**Welcoming the sun
dew drops on dry leaves--
an epitaph**

25.

**After the walk
two women relax on bench
exchanging tensions**

26.

**After cleaning
the maid leaves behind
an oily smell**

27.

A tiny spider
on the marigold sucking
its golden hue

28.

Seeking its roots
around oleander leaves
custard-apple

29.

A Christ crucified
with the violence of music
in the hall

30.

After the party
empty chairs in the lawn
new moon and I

31.

A dead voice
calling up at dawn:
drowsy eyes

32.

Such a wild change
in the mirror beside her--
I look a stranger

33.

Stoops to set
pleats of her saree
mid-August

34.

Meeting her once and
so much love in one night
to last the whole life

35.

Each sun aggravates
sadness moment by moment:
watching lonely street

36.

Narrowly escape
the midair web of spider
perched on hibiscus

37.

After extraction
he gives me my old tooth
list of drugs and new bill

38.

Collecting
fallen twigs on road
half-clad women

39.

Palms waving to greet
the first rain of the season:
I wait in the room

40.

Craving for a lick
of the salt on her skin
to become one with her

41.

Desire for diamond
dies with price I can't afford:
curse astrologer

42.

Wish I could be part
of the quietude this morning:
the sun's so promising

43.

Between virgin curves
he deep-breathes evening mist
rests in the hollow

44.

A load of wood
on her frail back
autumn evening

45.

Their shadows dissolve
and reappear walking
along the river

46.

On a cycle
he sells bouquets and roses
peddling dreams

47.

A watchman gazes
the stars on her body
elements clack

48.

Alone on the platform
wait for the train
swatting mosquitoes

49.

Summit of silence:
crossing the river--
feet dry

50.

Scars of existence--
wintry sun and chilly night
crouching on footpath

51.

A dead man
couldn't keep standing--
lies in dust

52.

Knocking emptiness
I cross the valleys within
now stand at stone gate

53.

Love's beauty
happening in the soul
God presence

54.

Silence of class test
occasion for haiku thoughts
lost in lecture

55.

To give voice to stone
he chisels the soul-image
Krishna plays the flute

56.

A lamp on the river--
the breast in bridal grace
waving in the gloaming

57.

In the spring sun
the lone pomegranate tree
smiling with buds

58.

The blue-white dapples
on the canvass seeing
the eye of silence

59.

The mirror is so small
I can't see the ocean
beyond my own look

60.

Silent Ram sheds
tears over the bodies burnt
in temple's name

61.

Violence breeders
climb power ladder--
peace stings

62.

Tears invisible
on his water face
Buddha meditates

63.

Through long shadows
in the morning remembering
gradual death

64.

After the 'plane bomb
stuck between concrete rubbles
a mother and child

65.

In the naked grave
some flesh still clings to the bones:
flies drone the last breaths

66.

Lost in black box
he searches love to live--
smoulders in ash

67.

They still bomb
lands for peace repeat
August 6

68.

They kill and hide
in mosques pray, in fear
kill more, and flee

69.

To hunt the hunters
flames mate with flames--
touch the sky

70.

Her presence--
alien sensation
in my veins

71.

In my courtyard swoop
neem, peepal, cheeku leaves:
autumn's ballet

72.

Between her fingers
and lips swaying
some puffed rice

73.

Still fresh
in the hanky's fold--
jasmine

74.

Soft footsteps
of students bunking
class test

75.

Her smile
arrival of spring
at the bower

76.

A butterfly
restless over the other
trying to console

77.

Ahead of us--
racing hyacinths
in the river

78.

Two lizards
inside the switchboard
turned on

79.

Two of us
at the waterfall
spraying love

80.

The whole night waiting
for the train running late
drowsy sunrise

81.

The night queen fragrance
seeps in from the windows
my bedroom blooms

82.

She snuggles up
in my arms her dimples
joy of heaven

83.

Her birth--
a poem dancing
in the eyes

84.

Swirling spiral
of her skirt spills tides of dream
and memory

85.

Echoes of night song
flutter our embrace in bed:
rushing morning rays

86.

Drowsy day
waning sex and love--
seasonal trick

87.

Unattached--
drop of water on
lotus leaf

88.

Baked and cracked
the sugarcane field
melts into mud

89.

Receding
winter leaves behind
allergies

90.

One more year
hanged with calendar--
a new god

91.

Picking at a dead
frog on the road--
a crow

92.

A crow picks at
cow's back in the afternoon--
drooping rag-picker

93.

Green velvet
from gate to door--
monsoon end

94.

A moving train--
confined in water bottle
rhythmic ripples

95.

Two toads croaking
in the drain celebrate
sudden shower

96.

**Chased by a cat
a rat
sinking into the sand**

97.

**Sculpturing psyche
in the city of dumb dreams:
idols sweat in sun**

98.

**Elements clack
in the small house shudder
the harp and strings**

99.

**God, the first victim
in the divided city:
one more house torched**

100.

**Basking in the past
they grow backward and yet talk
about the future**

101.

**Tattooed on her back
a nude exhibits a nude--
FTV model**

102.

Cut wrongly
each body a slave--
grey faces

103.

Tainted tongues
weave mazes to stop
birth of light

104.

Continuing
after ejaculation--
anti-climax

105.

Her wet lingerie reveals
more than her body--
I drown in her sea

106.

A stray sperm
grows in the ovum
blooms as puffball

107.

Winter chill--
her face grows
more wrinkles

108.

I see a finger
point to the eye in her breast
mist lingers on lips

109.

No letters today--
addresses of his dead friends
greying in diary

110.

With changing weather
they look for sun and shade both:
chameleon tune

111.

She resents
remembering allah
in her car

112.

In the class test
etching nudes on the desk
two late comers

113.

Night bombing
oleander garden
white as death

114.

Vultures waiting for
the remains of sacrifice
on the temple tree

115.

Seeking for
the white of the sky
in your closed eyes

116.

It's still overcast
fumes rise from smouldering ashes--
terrorists' attack

117.

On a marble grave
mating sparrows celebrate
peace in cemetery

118.

So much night
around the street light--
no one's safe

119.

Heat wave burns and blows
the withered nests whole night
birds wail searching for shades

120.

In the AC room
last night's coldness continues:
outside summer sun

121.

Clad in swimsuit
her body in water sweeps
waltzing ripples

122.

He sees the world
through the light of the body
with single eye

123.

Lingering in bed:
to go to church or pub--
Sunday morning

124.

Bedside--
our night clothes
await washing

125.

It still lingers like
the taste of stale love last night:
man and mask one

126.

Joy of union
reduces as rhythm falls:
restless embers grow

127.

She hides the mirror
with rose and lipstick
and keeps her fiction

128.

Reshuffling the shelves
it's only dust, in alleys
sneezing scholarship

129.

Gentle breaths prick
cheek and chest unclinging
looking away

130.

She undresses in
dim light perfumes her body
fills room with herself

131.

Love waves rise and fall
between our shores of soul
drinking each other's sea

132.

Shouting at her--
the breakfast aggravates
fire in the throat

133.

The lone mushroom--
a pregnant woman
stares out of the window

134.

After dinner
leaves a freezing banana
on the bed

135.

Moving shadows
in the silence of the room--
windows rattle

136.

Hungry eyes
rest on their graffiti
on the desk

137.

Face hidden
at the window hear
known voices

138.

Facing the sun
the lone flower
dying to bloom

139.

After the sunset
wheels of a returning cart
along the paddy

140.

Unmoved by the wind
he sits on a rock wearing
peace of the lake

141.

Unable to see
his pale shadow reeling through
vapour of the earth

142.

Night washes the sky--
the sun brings morning freshness
to my window

143.

After days
of depressing rains
golden orb

144.

Her frisky bounce
like snakebird springing its head
in water preying

145.

Her eyes flash in dark
the eel slides into her cave
I watch the mirror

146.

They take off again
their unthrown nets frighten fish--
water turns whiter

147.

Storms circling within
love is vision in action
blue dot in deep space

148.

Sound turns fainter
with greying geometry
a rusted sign

149.

Hope in hidden words
the invisible essence
nearer dawn's glory

150.

The mountain doesn't know
the river flows through its skin
now stains memory

151.

Filling
emptiness of the room
with ikebana

152.

A fly flying
in IC 809
free of cost

153.

On a sheet of ice
the chick trying to free itself
from its mother's claws

154.

Two souls celebrate
sailing on flames of white light
new millennium

155.

The lone hibiscus
waits for the sun to bloom:
morning's first offering

156.

Rain-soaked sun
sheds its sultry light--
her bare back

157.

Dew drop
on a blade of grass
rainbow

158.

A child's fingers feel
the butterfly lying
one with yellow leaves

159.

Shell-shocked or frozen
he stands in tears on hilltop
craving nirvana

160.

A dead leaf hangs
by a spider's thread
invisible in sun

161.

Staring at each other
two fishes in half-filled tank
ready for truce

162.

All guests gone:
after the late party
night and I alone

163.

Icy bed:
moving the pillow
closer to hers

164.

Only two of us--
and a big house with roaming
rats and cockroaches

165.

Meditation
cell phone rings
love echoes

166.

No god appears
in the dark of my closed eyes--
dream-image falters

167.

The little toddler
with her fey appearance:
a woodland sprite

168.

Seeking good news
I watch the lines on my palms
taking new turns

169.

We meet again
in the album ever fresh
her memory

170.

Tending the hooks
she blushes to see
the line of jewels

171.

The half moon
on her neck reminds of love
before departure

172.

Her trilling laugh
on the phone--
spring love

173.

Chess of love:
checkmate before
playing the game

174.

Falling leaves--
a sheet of autumn
in the courtyard

175.

They all look for
a little more moon coming
back from movie

176.

Waves of mist shine
with sun the day resumes
laughter shakes each bough

177.

Fearing allergies
he misses full moon party
savours white light

178.

After morning walk
the trio gossip each day
fresh revelation

179.

The holy Ganges
tolerates the city's garbage
even rape and death

180.

Greeting the first rains
after months of soaring heat--
the lone mango falls

181.

Exploring the world
in haiku silence God
an event

182.

The string of life
lost in the knots of small things:
living tragedies

183.

Sweeping gelled leaves
they raise dust in my compound
agitate windpipe

184.

The lone letter box
rusting in rain for years
none come to open

185.

Prolonged rains keep
dahlias from blooming--
seeds die again

186.

Shining on rose-leaves
silken layer of dew drops:
gloss of her mauve smile

187.

Chilly wind slaps
the window panes closed to keep
cross-legged couples warm

188.

Cloud over cloud
darken earth and hide stars:
dawn and dust one

189.

Red oleander and
hibiscus calling morning
to Kali

190.

Making love
she presses with her nails:
sparrow sports

191.

After lunch
stretching legs in cubby-hole:
a frog

12.

THE RIVER RETURNS

HAIKU

1.

Love tickles
with erect pistil:
hibiscus

2.

Suspended
on the spider's web—
a hibiscus

3.

Without washing hands
he touches hibiscus for worship:
her frowning glance

4.

After little rain
lilies smile with hibiscus—
the sun in May

5.

Too short
can't reach the height:
hibiscus

6.

Chrysanthemum
on the mossy roof
deeply rooted

7.

Too big for its web
between two roses—
a yellow spider

8.

Around falling leaves
a lone dreaming flower—
mid-February

9.

Stands alone in
the assembly of flowers—
Valentine's Day

10.

Not sad to die
blooming after a day's rain--
the mushroom

11.

A frog in the drain
stares at the traffic light
turning green

12.

December morning—
the first roses in the lawn:
fragrance in passing

13.

Leaves sway
to fly like birds
free in the sky

14.

Waving down
a leaf settles between
her breasts

15.

All night trees wave
with roaring winds:
autumn in the courtyard

16.

Bluebells and hazels
lost in rustic kisses:
morning stars burn

17.

On a lean
branch of neem swinging
a bulbul

18.

The courtyard stormed
with dried leaves and tamarind:
her frail hands sweeping

19.

From tree to courtyard
cotton balls blown on the wind—
seed in the centre

20.

Her scarf—
a rainbow of flowers
moving in the sky

21.

Her visit—
a transient painting
on holiday's floor

22.

Painting mom's smile
with broken crayons—
smiling Winny

23.

Intruding
her voice
on the phone

24.

Switching on
the hearing aid:
wife's warm soup

25.

With her saree
hitched up between the legs
my wife in bed

26.

Raising her saree
above the thighs bends to ease
and blocks my way

27.

Rising early
to make tea for everyone
the newly wed wife

28.

As the duo sit
lights go out—
sofa springs creaking

29.

Dissatisfied with
each other the two of us
in an empty house

30.

In the grey of dusk
sway between hope and despair
their dream promises

31.

Leaning sideways
she looks at mango pickle—
carries ache

32.

She repeats my ills
to express her anger but
I know only her love

33.

Basking in the sun
files nails in garden chair
my wife's friend

34.

No joy in lighting
the candles this Diwali:
both the children away

35.

Awaits his son's
phone call from the border:
dogs and cats wail

36.

His son's voice
not relayed by wire:
tense borders

37.

Distance mounts
each time he visits home:
love's last rites

38.

Shadow of age
on the wall—
second full moon

39.

Whiteness of the moon
and rocks howl with the wind—
December in the veins

40.

The sun not yet set
but the full moon rises
as if in a hurry

41.

Enveloping
all of the moon at night—
white chrysanthemums

42.

Setting moon
leaves behind sparkle
on the waves

43.

Noisy birds
don't let me sleep:
midnight moon

44.

Through the window
gaze at the moon hid behind
cloud after cloud

45.

Caressing
her pregnant belly—
water lily

46.

Still night
nude kisses in park
images haunt

47.

Standing behind
the window bars observes
darkness in shapes

48.

Night bombing
leaves the garden
white as death

49.

Vultures waiting
for the leftovers
of the sacrifice

50.

In the ruins
searching her photo:
evening

51.

Rutting dogs
sleepless the whole night
cries for sex

52.

Parents pelt stones
at the mating street dogs—
nosey children

53.

Nothing changes
the night's ugliness
in the lone bed

54.

Alone
in a shrunken bed
aged love

55.

In the well
studying her image
a woman

56.

Knitting silence
my wife on the bench
after lunch

57.

The lone mushroom—
a pregnant woman
stares out of the window

58.

Under the tree
in meditation sunken
a lone stone

59.

Alone
on the National Highway
Hanuman

60.

So many headlights
and my myopic vision—
walking difficult

61.

They walk on red coal
matching steps with drum-beats:
carnival of ecstasy

62.

Keeps him sleepless
fireworks and high decibel
puja all night

63.

Sleeping
on the cold floor
a mother with child

64.

Awaits sunrise
to hire an auto safely
sits at the bus stand

65.

Two women argue
over price and weight of fish:
the hapless huckster

66.

Carbon flakes drift
high above the flat I cough
they widen the roads

67.

Burning tap water
and seething house in the morning
heat wave cripples

68.

**Chanting mantra
with wine in one hand and
torch in other**

69.

**Building bridges
where there is no river--
the politician**

70.

**A mother and child
stuck between concrete rubbles:
fidayeen attack**

71.

**Setting ablaze
Muslim houses and children
seekers of Ram**

72.

**White-yellow trail
the Mirage on mission:
ten souls buried**

73.

**Amidst roaring guns
clouds blossom snow lotus:
light hilly terrain**

74.

**On the margin of
home-to-work-to-home routine—
life's achievements**

75.

**Shivering in the cold
young boys sell balloons late night—
New Year revellers**

76.

**Journeying tries
to raise his silence
to prayer**

77.

**Never enough
the earth's hunger for graves:
peace barricaded**

78.

**In measured pace
hit for divinity
two political golfers**

79.

**Disposable blades
one over the other—
dusty switchboard**

80.

Seismic lab
a network of cobweb:
no earthquake for long

81.

No Zen thought—
scribbling haiku with
gun in hand

82.

Staring at the huge
stone penis at Shinto shrine—
two female lovers

83.

With her breasts bobbing
up and down she challenges
the moon as she walks

84.

Sees the eyes
in walls as I rise
to kiss her

85.

Drowned
in empty whiteness:
love

86.

Wiping tears
from each other's eyes
two souls in love

87.

Writing with strands of
watery hair on her back
a love haiku

88.

Love of three decades
extinguished in a moment—
anger in the mouth

89.

Shedding bitterness
of the tiff in sex act
she and I

90.

Moist lips parting
on a tea cup promising
expectation

91.

Bending down to pick up
apple she presses
piercing embrace

92.

She preys the body
behind obsidian sheath
fatuous flap

93.

After burns
leaving the body
the dead skin

94.

Her palms
the only lingerie
in Fashion Show

95.

Crouching out of the bath
with hand on the genital
his new tenant

96.

A pregnant woman
bending over the mushroom
bloomed under a tree

97.

Awaits the bloom
of love in her womb:
silent action

98.

Lovely with hope
the glow in her eyes:
no need of sun

99.

Her body—
the night's perfection
in dim light

100.

Seeing her
a liquid sensation
between the thighs

101.

On a canvas
a poet in twilight
painting her skin

102.

Sensing her presence
he stares down the street—
lingering perfume

103.

A star in making—
but an island appears:
the palm amuses

104.

Sipping gin with lime
he says he loves sex each night
but hates the smell

105.

Bleeding fingers draw
new domes of betrayal in
windy matrices

106.

His tongue
between the teeth—
sudden sneeze

107.

Fed up with my sex
she threatens to move
to our daughter's room

108.

Leaves him alone
to escape daily rape
in bed his wife

109.

The bedroom altar
no substitute for temple—
sacrifice of sex

110.

Winter's chill—
sweating under the gown
her thighs and breasts

111.

Scanning
her stooping breasts—
the first night

112.

Measuring life with
ejaculatory rhythm—
envies sparrow sports

113.

Her thighs—
resting place for my head
on bed

114.

Trying to decipher
the complex curves on my palms
in the morning rays

115.

Fondling her breasts
I incite a poem
on her body

116.

**A film of mist
between my eyes
and her image**

117.

**Locked in her eyes
the bright glow
of the goddess**

118.

**Melting in
the colour of the heart
the sun in the west**

119.

**A lizard shrieks
before the climax:
love making**

120.

**The blood passes through
green veins I hear the heart play
melody of dews**

121.

**Every breath
love in action—
fire in the hole**

122.

No bottom reader
but the shape and the lines do tell
she can stir the soul

123.

The aching limbs and
blood dripping between the legs:
love-making postponed

124.

With his head between
the knees he squats and smells
the body's sweat

125.

Bones rattle to make
a song of flesh in the night---
togetherness

126.

Insomnia
blaming her
not old age

127.

Lies with her
in freezing cold:
an empty tube

128.

Invisible
jangles odours presences--
twinges in bed

129.

Drying on the line
pork venison and beef--
the room smells their vests

130.

Don't know their tongue—
the stars beyond the mountains
whisper among themselves

131.

While I lie alone
shapeless fears rest on my eyes
heavier than time

132.

Searching salvation
a moth flies into the lamp:
oily burial

133.

Colours sparkle in
the morning's dew on the blooms—
my breathing changes

134.

Nobody cares
burial of my dreams
in coal dust

135.

Besides allergies
so many other complaints:
sudden weather change

136.

Bronchial breathing—
the only sound audible
in the soulless space

137.

Noisy birds
don't let me sleep:
midnight moon

138.

He sweeps yellow leaves
or gathers years in a heap
burns to merge with dust

139.

Cleaning dusts from
the old sandals for a walk:
again the same pain

140.

Peeling paint
from the drawing room—
shadows flicker

141.

Seeing no image
in the mirror of time—
foggy blankness

142.

Hot bath or no bath—
the cough persists unmindful
of the New Year's eve

143.

Sees in a flash—
opening the eyes
takes a long time

144.

Linked with anxiety
my comfort at his home:
Ph.D. viva

145.

Fear of forgetting—
car insurance premium
paid a month ahead

146.

Fears the approach
of night with him—
twisting tassels

147.

In the lone room
prefers haiku to yoga
drinking scotch

148.

Sunday afternoon—
waving into gin
two drops of lime

149.

Difficult to change
I am what I have disowned—
dressing down salads

150.

The bed is short
and the covering shorter—
crouching alone

151.

Unruffled
by passions and clamours—
Buddha's calm

152.

Seeks Buddha's stone bowl
to win the bamboo princess:
she dwells on moon beams

153.

Her heart
a thousand doors of
oneness

154.

Standing behind
the window bars observes
darkness in shapes

155.

Disappears
into dust her last
photograph

156.

Trying to read good news
I look at the lines taking
new turns on my palms

157.

Looking for riches
in her left hand shortening
days on the pavement

158.

They sculpture psyche
in the city of dumb dreams:
idols sweat in sun

159.

Pulling out white hairs
she reminds increasing age:
time's fragrance unchanged

160.

**Still a child—
embracing a breast
sleeps her man**

161.

**Exchanging
anger with roses:
petals fall**

162.

**They all walk
like shadows in night
for themselves**

163.

**Lying on his table
a few unanswered letters
and unrealized dreams**

164.

**A little child
chases the painted dreams
on butterfly wings**

165.

**Two butterflies
racing with each other
perch on the wire**

166.

**A child's fingers feel
the butterfly lying
one with yellow leaves**

167.

Sudden rain drops wet
the wings of a butterfly
lying at the basil

168.

Lost my way again
asking for direction:
a pleasant change

169.

Locked between the cracks
cockroaches in the alcove
dropping their eggs

170.

Awaiting their turn
to feast on a dead dog
crows in a circle

171.

A crow hits
the scare crow and cracks
its earthen head

172.

A crow picking
at the ripe papaya and
another waiting

173.

A yellow spider
on the blooming marigold
weaves tiny webs

174.

Two lizards fight
to mate on the wall—
balancing act

175.

After the quake
a dog sniffing his master's
presence in the rubble

176.

Searching Christ's sandals
in the pile of shoes at
the church's entrance

177.

Traffic snails through
the water-logged road I feel
a manhole cover

178.

Dust mites devouring
the secrets preserved
in my diary

179.

Seeing my shadow
three fish in the pond look
for a safe corner

180.

**Sitting with its tail
coiled round sweets in the box
a lizard**

181.

**A hooker hides
behind the green letter box:
looking for a client**

182.

**Too heavy
these man-made machines
choking weight**

183.

**Students murmuring
over the class test result:
the teacher's curved lips**

184.

**In the moving train
sleeping on his feet
the newspaperman**

185.

**Flowers inviting
seeds of love scattered in
the perfumed garden**

186.

Looking for a prey
a snake slides through the fence
warmth of the sun

187.

Safe from sun
under nascent leaf
a gold fish

188.

With sunrise
gone to sleep
the morning moon

189.

Two dreamy eyes
await the rising sun
through the fogged window

190.

A sweating sun
after the midnight chill—
changing hues of spring

191.

The sun conceals
aeons of darkness planets
mirror in the sky

192.

Closing its eyes
in the setting sun—
the Ganges in autumn

193.

He sees art
in her wanton dress—
crawling curls

194.

A butterfly rests
on the butterfly tattooed
on her sunning back

195.

The sun not yet set
but the full moon rises
as if in a hurry

196.

Setting sun
leaves behind sparkle
on the waves

197.

Suddenly rise
the sleeping waves from far off—
'quake in the sea

198.

Swollen sea
boiling over the head—
roars increase

199.

The sun rolls
on the waving Ganges—
whitens love-hope

200.

On the wave's crest
travels a fallen leaf—
rot on the bank

201.

Couldn't erase the wind's
soliloquy from the waves
breaking on the shore

202.

Travelling back
from the waves of bliss
a foam-leap

203.

On the waves rise shells
in accents lie with love—
beauty on the shore

204.

Bathing in thousands
they float lamps on her breast
the river sparkles

205.

Knee-deep in the pond
standing obeisantly
nude worshippers

206.

Ends with ritual
one more morning—
sun-worshippers in the pond

207.

Awaits the sunrise
in the chilly Ganges
a nude worshipper

208.

Sees visions
eating food of gods—
mushroom

209.

Fills the void
with illusions and self—
names them god

210.

December almost
over what new wish to add
to Christmas wish list

211.

On Christmas eve
santa claus takes leave—
mist on chairs in pairs

212.

Standing
between flowers
Jesus on the cross

213.

Making holes
in the wooden cross
white ants

214.

Colours of envy
stick on their colleagues' faces:
Holi revelry

215.

Krishna offering
parijata to Radha:
Narada looks on

216.

The temple's dome
in the flooded Ganga--
empty kalash

217.

Fermenting spring
in the arms of lovers:
a secret sin

218.

The cherry pink
in the spring—
a framed nude

219.

Embrace
suffocates in bed—
chill seeps through slit

220.

Wintry chill—
enters the cold bed:
skips morning walk

221.

Winter rain
bends the roses low—
lumbar pain

222.

The long night passes
sleeplessly I deep-breathe
the December chill

223.

Alone and sleepless
count hours by asthmatic bouts—
the long winter nights

224.

A part of the night
hidden in the morning moon:
the sun waves bye bye

225.

Nothing changes
the night's ugliness
in the lone bed

226.

The first night
spots on the sheet:
clothes wake up

227.

Long wintry night—
opening the mail box
for a date

228.

Vulnerable
darkness of the opening:
standing erect

229.

Whiteness of the moon
and rocks howl with the wind—
December in the veins

230.

Seek my haven
where the sky arches the sea—
a white gull leads

231.

Stars mock his drinking
alone on the cement bench:
moon in the glass

232.

Spend our short time
together after a long
watching the moon

233.

Along the road
in shanties they shack up—
dreams in smoke

234.

Seeking smell
in cactus flowers:
late monsoon

235.

Clouds don't rain
coldly come and go—
icy bed

236.

All night rain
the gaping roof
her shelter

237.

Sudden rain
on the way home—
a peacock

238.

After the night's rain
the sky's still overcast:
wet Christmas today

239.

Through thick clouds
sees an arc of moon—
her belly

240.

Brightness
straining through the trees:
tea in full moon

241.

Lonely nights and
days of non-stop rains—
depression mounts

242.

Travelling
on the wings of winter
ill news

243.

Celebrating
return of the light and warmth:
winter solstice

244.

Feels the shadow
with wet fingers
in the fog

245.

Mist surrounds:
the steel statue watches
few visitors

246.

Morning fog:
her face invisible
even the sun

247.

The evening fog:
invisible her hand
on my shoulder

248.

Slowly clears
the morning fog—
end of the year

249.

Swollen fogs
ready to make way
for the sun

250.

Her make-up spoilt
in the evening mist:
looking for light

251.

After dust storm rain
alloys with cool colours:
rainbow in the west

252.

Waxing crescent
searches the setting sun
worshipped in water

253.

Sees beard
shining in the mirror:
morning on the face

254.

In a flash
trapping eternity—
the camera

255.

Post-lunch solitude
filled with thoughts that couldn't become
even a haiku

256.

A sly lover
ejaculates poison—
sting operation

257.

With glittering diamond
on the navel swinging
an item bomb

258.

The phone rings:
in the middle he rises—
prayers unsaid

259.

With a telescope
view the lunar eclipse—
midnight shadows

260.

Out of wood and stone
he carves his vision of peace:
night's secret visage

261.

Suffer animals
with a peculiar smell:
men in white khadi

262.

Crossing the shadows
in the Indo-Pak match—
the last ball

263.

Drunken with force
spreading the century's sore:
nine eleven

264.

Freedom to kill
with faith in divine regime:
terrorist's peace

265.

Watches the snow rain
with finger on the trigger:
insurgence in Drass

266.

Reaching nowhere—
ideas flying from the minds
of top echelons

267.

Himself doesn't
listen but teaches
communication

268.

Her anger shifts
from manure to cellphone:
10 o' clock soap

269.

Winking at her
in the dark—
power cut

270.

Two peacocks
on a dancing spree:
see water

271.

Dancing
a few muddied crocs:
the river returns

272.

Nibbling a leaf
between her fingers
a dragon-fly

273.

A small frog
leaping on my hand
from the pothole

274.

Birds crouch in nests
along the snowclad path—
wheezing silence

275.

Away from home—
smell of frying fish
in the air

276.

Swimming afresh
in the glass box
two gold fish

277.

Peace in silence
of the heart and body's cells:
Buddha's calm

278.

Weaving its nest
grass blade by grass blade
R.K.Singh

279.

Sad and dull
his backyard poultry—
fears of bird flu

280.

Mooching about
a rose petal in the sun—
a butterfly

281.

An orgasmic view
from behind the car's window
the Taj Mahal

282.

Perches nervously
on the fence a squirrel
nibbling its luck

283.

Wintry evening—
my grandson toddling round
room to room

284.

Sudden screech of tyres:
a frog from the pothole
perches on the car

285.

Selling tea
a mustachioed Mizo
in shanty

286.

Awaits the train
in November night—
insects all around

287.

Truce between
two lizards inside
the light fixture

288.

Ten fish in the tank
rising in twos threes or fours
to the bait atop

289.

Hiding in the shade
of toilet brush in the bath
a frightened mouse

290.

Awaits a rickshaw
under the gulmohar tree
a girl with lilac

291.

Jumped over the head
a sticky frog on the ground---
stoning to death

292.

Alone
the cellphone on her bed
rings

293.

In the changing hues
of rainbow in the east:
sun and lightning

294.

Flashing a rainbow
at the dining table
her diamond nose-pin

295.

Reflects the rainbow
in the mirror of water—
Yamuna Bridge

13

SOME MORE HAIKU

1.

Sunlight
behind the temple
cloud's edge

2.

Glued to the rock
feeling the river's cold flame
my hands and feet

3.

Sun rising late
slow arrival of winter
feverish warmth

4.

Fallen tea drops
reminding me of the guests
last evening

5.

Empty shells
about the quadrangle:
English teacher

6.

Children return home
splashing through the pool on road
school bags on their heads

7.

Moving between
the fingers of a toddler
the first winter rain

8.

Emitting
a mouldy smell
her blouse

9.

Before parting
she slips to the floor—
raindrops fall

10.

From the edge
jumps into the pond
a green frog

11.

Inhales sun
through the foggy morning
a leaping frog

12.

A mass of cloud
floating below the plane:
my son's balloon

13.

Flying over the rose
tattooed on her back
a butterfly

14.

Abandoned
her mother on the wall
fading streaks

15.

Their first dating:
with inverted reflection
walk out of the bar

16.

Awaiting welcome
midst the same old worries
the new Samvat

17.

Stench of burning leaves
mounts with smoke in the evening:
asthmatic breathing

18.

East faced
yoga in the fog—
breathlessness

19.

Naval cadets
master the waves in Peacock Bay
pelicans bathe

20.

Two barking dogs
break the night's monotony
competition

21.

**Their love game:
bloodstained on the wall
two lizards**

22.

**Pigeons fly
for shelter through smoke
blazing windows**

23.

**Looking for shade
under the shapeless cloud
a rag picker**

24.

**Scrounging for scrap
in a pile of garbage
empty Christmas**

25.

**Slowly dissolves
the mud-brick house of worship:
rain on Christmas eve**

26.

**Prayerful thoughts
she invites with smile:
Mother's compassion**

27.

Her wrinkled fingers
on the rudraksh rosary:
Buddh Purnima

28.

Leaves fall
to touch his shrine—
mukti

29.

Awaiting
the wind's blow at door
autumn leaves

30.

Parrots stop chirping
on the guava tree—
autumn dusk

31.

Hangs
a fading flower
between the twigs

32.

Yellow lemons
still hanging after the storm
sunny backyard

33.

At the kitchen door
await a handful of wheat
two pigeons

34.

On way home
a crow shits on my head:
clouded sky

35.

Academics
in convocation gowns—
circus clowns

36.

Each morning
the same prayers—
God's silence

37.

On the wall
witness of the past
moth eaten

38.

Morning's foul smell
the birds too change their tunes:
sewage treatment

39.

Dusts settle
on the rising creepers
flowers grey

40.

Shelling the peas
the toddler swallows some
grins with delight

41.

Streetlights die
with the onrush of rain—
walking to silence

42.

Greets no known faces
at the street corner kiosk:
only folds of night

43.

Full moon waves
through the branches at window—
wintry night

44.

This morning
sun misses the warmth—
chilly wind

45.

Naphthalene smell
oozes from the sweater—
fourth November

46.

In the crowded mall
a santa claus asking for
my autograph

47.

Picnickers boat
on the edge of Maithon lake
dropping litter

48.

In the shade behind
a plastic sheeting hut
a sick woman

49.

Her lonely grief
melts in the candle wax
evening's dark floor

50.

Swallows the pills
and chants mantra to sleep:
flower moon

51.

Sits on a mound
overlooking the camp
awaits signal

52.

Flying to the tube light
one after the other
two owls picking moths

53.

Ants crowd
under the hibiscus—
snake's broken shell

54.

Noisy parrots
returning to the tree:
sun set early
]

55.

Hides behind
a naked tree
the full moon

56.

The wet pages
of yesterday's newspaper:
all trains late

57.

4 a.m.
fear of sleeping
train arrives

58.

A pregnant clown
on the squalid mattress—
crying inside

59.

Boarding the train
he looks for his luggage—
cries of theft

60.

Evokes spirit
to ease knots of pain
cyst on the neck

61.

He fears seeking
intercession from a Wiccan:
spirit's clash

62.

Not a day without
begging gods to solve problems—
faith in helplessness

63.

Reciting
my nightly woes
no one hears

64.

Stretches his arms
and wiggles the toes in bed:
sleeping brain

65.

Making lemon tea
and warm buttery toast—
birds singing outside

66.

Treading with
spring feet my grandson
now nine months

67.

They squat to ease
along the railway track—
transistors sing

68.

29 years in
a vat yet not ready for
feeling of old age

69.

Waiting in the lounge
the only passenger:
sandal perfume

70.

58 ends:
emptying dying seeds
from the condom

71.

Fit of sneezes
no winter allergy:
thinking of sex

72.

Breathing afresh
up from the abyss—
meditation

73.

A blue mist
swirls around his head—
floating hand

74.

It's not yet over
sex is eternal delight
I wait till next night

75.

She goes out
into sultry heat—
feeding time

76.

Her fingers push
the roots into the earth—
touch-me-not

77.

Her voice
distant yet I can hear
her breasts

78.

Softness of her lips
and dancing of her tongue—
warm wetness

79.

Smells the happiness
of earth in the khus she wears—
summer's first rain

80.

A thin moon
on her neck hides love
in silk gauge

81.

Dark street--
realizing how scary
the night is

82.

Midnight—
absent whispers
from her room

83.

Sensing sex
in her pink smile
long talk short

84.

Tying a knot
to hang on—
end of rope

85.

White stubble
round his august chin—
Saturday

86.

Neighbours listening
to headphones or reading books—
bus ride on Sabbath

87.

Unclothing
the white night—
lips meeting lips

88.

With fearing finger
touches her to reach the clit
slides...soft...hard...slow...fast

89.

First he, then she
wipes the post-coital shit
with underwear

90.

Seeing her naked
fuses logos and eros—
a fresh senryu

91.

Deep into silence
can't celebrate yoni
again and again

92.

Searches her bra
in the pile of nightclothes--
sun warming

93.

Noon sun—
yellow blouse
on her wet back

94.

On the beach
she combs her long hair—
Aphrodite

95.

She sees in the light
smuts of the nightly acts
on her underwear

96.

She departs
leaving behind her clothes
over mine

97.

Under white light
dressing off her shoulders
musky scent up

98.

In the cup
she stirs the tea bag--
areolar hue

99.

Red with shame
the sky at sunrise--
her new kiss

100.

Staring at dried
stains of the last night's act
drenched in shower

101.

She sings the morning
with hands between the legs:
summer drenches

102.

Entwined
under the limbs
petals

103.

Sultry heat
midsummer lethargy:
dog star shines

104.

The winter chill
slowly rises each evening—
frozen shadows

105.

The full moon
behind a bare tree—
branches curve

106.

Fluttering around
a golden marigold
golden butterfly

107.

Hanging
by a spider's thread—
the wanton leaf

108.

Mynahs mate
on the lightning-struck tree:
quiet backyard

109.

Waving trees spark
the wires without lighting—
sky in the dog's mouth

110.

Sun's brooding hue
over the evening sky:
vapoury time

111.

Between bare branches
two pigeons share silence:
All Hallows' Day

112.

Under the blue sky
the chestnut trees bloom
white candle

113.

The sun shines
on the winter blooms—
our first rose

114.

Sea waves
roll from faraway
white peaks

115.

Wintry wind
bangs the window tonight
my thoughts agitate

116.

Restless birds
chirping on neem tree
midnight chill

117.

Wings of a mynah
flutter over the water
in an earthen pot

118.

Sun from the window
fluorescent light from the wall—
dusky face

119.

Fingers feel
decaying fireflies
in lamplight

120.

Then as now
A-bomb emptiness—
raindrops ache

121.

Alone
with folded hands
Mother in guest room

122.

Her eyes
in the mirror
specious red

123.

Her fingers
I taste in the orange
she peels

124.

The perfume
from her arm pits—
yoga

125.

Seeking smell
in the cherries
yet to bloom

126.

Walking over
a carpet of dried leaves
hears own footsteps

127.

Spring returns:
autumn in my courtyard
unending

128.

Gulaal
cloud the temple precincts—
worm moon

129.

Sweet scent of night queen—
reading a hundred haiku
for one real gem

14

SOME HAIKU SEQUENCES

LOVE-MAKING

**Lovemaking
he melts into her
time stands still**

**Lovemaking
the sound of orgasm:
LaoTzu***

**Making love
she tastes the salt upon
his shoulder**

**Candling in vein
leaves marks of teeth on her neck
utters holiness**

**Unclothing
the white night:
lips meeting lips**

**Writes with strands of
watery hair on her bare back
a love haiku**

**After the tumble
buried between the sheets
leftover passion**

**She departs
leaving behind her clothes
over mine**

***A great sound is inaudible, and a great image is formless,” said Lao Tzu.**

FULL MOON

**A crescent
in the western horizon –
missing the moon**

**The full moon
behind the bare tree–
branches curve**

**Squeaking
under the full moon
dry sky**

**Wet bodies
of bathing women:
full moon night**

**Splendid with the moon
night in silver peace dreams
through folds of light**

**Two long hours
under the chinar:
lost full moon**

**Aggravating pain
in the legs and sleeplessness:
blue moon**

**Winter allergies–
staying inside to escape
the wind in full moon**

SNAKES

**Sunny morning:
a snake slides through the fence
looking for a prey**

**Full of silt
the Ganga overflows:
snakes under the waves**

**Raises its hood
a cobra in water:
algae criss-cross**

**Searching reason
in the labyrinthine pattern:
snakes in courtyard**

**Avoids searching
mushroom in the crowded green –
snake on the fence**

**Searches thorn apples
to propitiate *lingam*:
snake in sanctum**

**A snake's tail
coils round a sweet
in the box**

**Smells a snake
in the wet grass –
her smile**

**Rises with tickles
between the thighs
the dream-serpent**

**A yellow snake
slithers on the grass –
dewy trail of love**

Climbing high through
rough pathway and stony cold
a green snake

A snake's dead skin
near the fence:
she stands unmoving

4

FOG

His presence
among the known faces—
evening fog

A thin fog
hides the wintry moon
rising slowly

Slowly clears
the morning fog
end of the year

Hides the sun
a dense fog in the morning:
waning winter

Stench of burning leaves
mounts with fog in the evening
asthmatic breathing

Shrouded in fog
the lone pomegranate
in the backyard

Wrapped in fog
the flying plane
seen by sound

Feels the shadow
with wet fingers on the beach:
sound through the fog

5

MARITAL TENSION

Years of home
in three suitcases:
deep breathing

With his crying baby
he moves in the train's passage:
marital tension

Smoking woman
under a naked tree:
moon garden

Night's passage
on the beach with her –
silky sting

Orange streak
through the clouds –
seat belt fastened

Fortune melting
with change in the wind –
summer-end

SUN

A sweating sun
after the midnight chill—
changing hues of spring

The sun conceals
aeons of darkness planets
mirror in the sky

The sun not yet set
but the full moon rises
as if in a hurry

Two dreamy eyes
await the rising sun
through the fogged window

With sunrise
gone to sleep
the morning moon

Setting sun
leaves behind sparkles
on the waves

A dot
on the sun's head:
venus

The sun rolls
on the waving Ganges
whitens love-hope

Awaits the sunrise
in the chilly Ganges
a nude worshipper

**Closing its eyes
in the setting sun—
the Ganges in autumn**

**Safe from sun
under nascent leaf
a small fish**

**In the changing hues
of rainbow in the east:
sun and lightning**

**Puppies groping
for the tits of our doggy
relaxing in sun**

**Basking in the sun
files nails in garden chair
my wife's friend**

7

SPIDER

**In their webs
spiders racing to spin
on meatless prey**

**Too big for its web
between two roses
a yellow spider**

Suspended
on the spider's web
a white flower

A tiny spider
on the marigold sucking
its golden hue

Narrowly escape
the midair web of spider
perched on hibiscus

8

MOSQUITOES

Without humming
mosquitoes alight and bite --
all night awake

Leaving the signs
of mosquito menace
on white wall

Lies with her
in freezing cold --
mosquitoes trill

Can't flap a fly
or swat a mosquito --
hands so inept

A mosquito
drifting her attention from
haiku in bath

The long night passes
sleeplessly I deep-breathe --
mosquitoes in bed

Waiting for the train
alone on the platform
swatting mosquitoes

9

SHADOW OF AGE

Enveloping
all of the moon at night –
white chrysanthemums

The half moon
on her neck reminds of love
before departure

The sun not yet set
but the full moon rises
as if in a hurry

A star shines bright
beside the crescent moon
she fakes a smile

Shadow of age
on the wall –
second full moon

Whiteness of the moon
and rocks howl with the wind
December in the veins

After the party
empty chairs in the lawn –
new moon and I

The sky couldn't retain
all of the moon now entering
my house through the window

Setting moon
leaves behind sparkle
on the waves

Noisy birds
don't let me sleep:
midnight moon.

10

HIBISCUS

Red oleander and
hibiscus calling morning
to Kali

The lone hibiscus
waits for the sun to bloom:
morning's first offering

Without washing hands
he touches the hibiscus for worship:
her frowning glance

Love tickles
with erect pistil:
hibiscus

Narrowly escape
the midair web of spider
perched on hibiscus

A tiny spider
on the hibiscus sucking
its golden hue

Suspended
on the spider's web --
a hibiscus

After little rain
lilies smile with hibiscus --
the sun in May

Hibiscus
over the mossy roof
deeply rooted

Oleander and
hibiscus blaze with passion --
making love in sun

11

ALONE

Waiting for the train
alone on the platform
swatting mosquitoes

After the party
empty chairs in the lawn --
new moon and I

All guests gone:
after the late party
night and I

Nothing changes
the night's ugliness
in the lone bed

Alone
in a shrunken bed
aged love

In the well
studying her image
a woman

Knitting silence
my wife on the bench
after lunch

A moth
struggling for life
on wire

Between virgin curves
he deep-breathes evening mist
rests in the hollow

Shell-shocked or frozen
he stands in tears on hilltop
craving nirvana

The lone mushroom --
a pregnant woman
stares out of the window

Facing the sun
the lone flower
dying to bloom

A dead leaf hangs
by a spider's thread
invisible in sun

Under a tree
in meditation sunken
a lone stone

Alone
on the National Highway
Hanuman

12

AT WAR...

**Night bombing
leaves the garden
white as death**

**Vultures waiting
for the leftovers
of the sacrifice**

**Whiteness of the moon
and rocks howl with the wind--
fear in the veins**

**In the ruins
searching her photo:
evening**

**Standing behind
the window bars observes
darkness in shapes**

**Awaits his son's
phone call from the border:
dogs and cats wail**

**A dead voice
calling up at dawn:
drowsy eyes**

**Alone
on her bed rings
the cell phone**

**Unmoved by the wind
he sits on a rock wearing
peace of the lake**

13

FOG/MIST

**Swollen fogs
ready to make way
for the sun**

**Morning fog:
her face invisible
even the sun**

Two dreamy eyes
await the rising sun
through the fogged window

Standing behind
the window bars observes
shapes in fog

The evening fog --
invisible her hand
on my shoulder

A film of mist
between my eyes
and her image

Mist surrounds
the steel statue watches
few visitors

14

WINTER

Winter chill --
her face grows
more wrinkles

The lone hibiscus
waits for the sun to bloom:
morning's first offering

Looking for a prey
a snake slides through the fence:
warmth of the sun

The morning fog rests
on a swathe of pond moss:
the lone fish looks for sun

Icy bed:
moving the pillow
closer to hers

Chilly wind slaps
the window panes closed to keep
cross-legged couple warm

Receding
winter leaves behind
allergies

Winter's over:
spring knocking with
mango blossoms

15

SUNRISE

Sun rising late
slow arrival of winter
feverish warmth

Awaits the sunrise
in the chilly Ganges
a nude worshipper

Sunrise
behind the temple:
cloud's edge

Flowers turn
to the rising sun:
greeting

A dense fog
hides the sunrise--
waning winter

Her day begins
before dawn with the lantern
worshipping lingam

Aged with seasons
now seeks sojourn in the west--
no more sunrise

Welcoming sunrise
dew drops on dry leaves--
an epitaph

15

SOME TANKA SEQUENCES

1

OVER AND OVER AGAIN

Short nights and long days
sleep loss rustles a friction
echoing in bed
the cycle of cravings
over and over again

Rises with
the lingering shadow
of the dream:
the serpent of love
tickles between the thighs

The body that died
and the body that quivered
with menstruation
is me in dream fear and hope
shake love to light the flame

The cocktail of drink
drug and meditation –
nightly yelps
tease unshared guilt
the hell of silence

SILENCE

**Conveying
the inexpressible
her lines and curves:
she acts in plots of pain
the dumb sense of silence**

**Brooding condemning
things not done and unable
to undo she prays
ceaselessly fails to stop
now compelled to make a choice**

**Unknowable
the soul's pursuit hidden
by its own works:
the spirit's thirst, the strife
the restless silence, too much**

**A moment of love
and long silence for years:
from dream to nightmare
again fear grips my soul
I sense her presence around**

**Twisting tassels
round her finger fears coming
of night in bed
octopus grips the body
and buckles into silence**

ROSE

Greeting the first rains
after months of soaring heat
the lone rose flutters
little petals to the ground
echoing our first embrace

Shining on rose-leaves
silken layer of dew drops:
gloss of her mauve smile
she blushes when I tell her
beauty of the blooming rose

The fragrance of rose
seeps through the windows
coupled with full moon
adds to my delight though I'm
alone in my bed tonight

Roses await
sun and wind to clear
the baleful fog:
I fear she'll say no
to my love again

I'M NO RIVER

**The sun couldn't help
nor fish protest:
river has no sex
so it dried up
trapped in its own banks**

**The otter watches
a duck walking on
the frozen river
icicles drop bit by bit
from a lone tree**

**At the river
she folds her arms and legs
resting her head
upon her knees and sits
as an island**

**I couldn't understand
what's Hindu about having
fish and onion
after prayers by the river
in the temple courtyard**

**I'm no river
flowing toward the sea:
I must find my way
asking strangers in strange places
sensing soul, using insight**

LOVE

His message to meet
at moonrise among flowers
sparkles a secret
on her smiling face passion
glows with charming fervour

She is no moon yet
she drifts like the moon, takes care
of him from the sky --
meets him for a short, waxing
leaves him for a long, waning

Before going to bed
she looks too sad to have
any sweet dream:
the lonely lamp glints no love
and no star peeks through the curtains

Yearning to meet him
she turns a silk-worm spinning
love-silk in cold night --
stands in a shade melting tears
like a candle, drop by drop

Stains of dried dewy
tears on the eyelids tell of
the load on her mind:
clothed in spring the willow twigs
reveal the changed relation

Locked in the shadows
of unrolled curtains her love
in the lone boudoir --
she plays tunes on the violin
flowers fade at the windows

She senses all things
changing as she passes through
the city again:
should I leave the old house or
lie in the grave before death

6

F E A R

Slung-jawed awake
two grinning skeletons sit
bolt upright in bed
hear the shrieks next door but
too scared to call the police

The nightly ghosts crowd
my mind's passage to forge
gods' names in disguise
I fail to scan the face
of thought and life in the dark

The chill outside
deprives me of the bright moon
I breathe in my fears:
asthmatic bouts haunt and
jealousy itches the throat

Night's prisoned friends
keep me awake with planes
flying over the Ashram*
every now and then I watch
the direction matters

One thousand miles
traveling together
in tense silence
he and she contemplate
the next round of duel

I can't cement cracks
nor save the frames from collapse:
the wreck reveals the myth
I need not knit new dreams
if truth's so cold and stingy

(*spiritual sanctuary)

ON THE BEACH

**A cloud-eagle
curves to the haze
in the west
skimming the sail
on soundless sea**

**Watching the waves
with him she makes an angle
in contemplation:
green weed and white foam break
on the beach with falling mood**

**Crazy these people
don't know how to go
down with the swirl and
up with the whirl but
play in the raging water**

**They couldn't hide the moon
in water or boat but now
fish moonlight from sky:
I watch their wisdom and smile
why I lent my rod and bait**

MIDNIGHT SENSATIONS

I fear the demons
rising from my body
at midnight crowding
the mind and leading the soul
to deeper darkness

Sleeps the night with
desires wrapped in blanket —
spring in the eyes
gods couldn't change the rhythm
of the body and its needs

Awake in dream time
he looks for the candle —
love's invitation
lighting up in the dark
and sings the body's song

The night queen fragrance
seeps in through the window
coupled with full moon
adds to my delight though I'm
alone in my bed tonight

The sleep is buried
in sex for diversion
yoga or prayers:
the dawn preserves bitter eyes
in the day's bleak passage

An insomniac
weak with desires and prayers
hears the heartbeats
rising fast with dark hours
survives one more nightmare

NO MOIST SECRETS

**Layers of dust thicken
on the mirror water makes
the smuts prominent:
I wipe and wipe and yet
the stains stay like sin**

**When I have no home
I seek refuge in the cage
of your heart and close
my eyes to see with your nipples
the tree that cared to save from sun**

**In the forest of your hair
my finger searches
the little pearl of blood
that stirs the hidden waters
and contains my restlessness**

**Crazy these people
don't know how to go down
with the swirl and up
with the whirl but play
in the raging water**

**The lips in her eyes
and long hours in the mouth--
no moist secrets
between us to reveal:
now our backs to each other**

**All her predictions
could come true had I paid her
the fees for writing
psychic reflections on dreams
I failed to realize in life**

Wrinkles on the skin
remind me of time's passage
year by year travelled
long distances renewing
spirit and waving goodbye

Feeling the difference
between a tin house and
a weather proof tent:
on the Yamuna's bank
Kumbh deluge to wash sins

With black and white marks
and nest of ants on its skin
the tree grows taller
shining through the geometry
of sun, moon and halogen

My voice
brown like autumn
crushed in noises I can't
understand days pass in colors
buried

Before the foamy
water could sting her vulva
a jellyfish passed
through the crotch making her shy --
the sea whispered a new song

YAMUNA: One of the holy rivers for the Hindus, bathing in which is considered necessary for remission of sins. It rises from the Himalayas and flows for about 1380 km to join the Ganges at Allahabad.

KUMBH: Hindus assemble on the banks of the Yamuna in Allahabad every six and 12 years for a holy dip in the river, seeking release from their sins. The last Kumbh festival at the end of 2000 was the century's biggest, in which many foreigners also participated. They stayed in the weather-proof tents while the natives had to stay in tin tents. Over ten million people took a bath in the river.

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1985); *Pan-Continental Premium Poets Anthology: 1985-86* (eds. Bohumila Falkowski et al., 1986); *Resonances* (ed. Laxmi Narayan Mahapatra, 1986); *New Voices in Indian Parnassus* (ed. Krishna Srinivas, 1987); *The Symphony Humane* (ed. Laxmi Narayan Mahapatra, 1987); *Contemporary Indian English Poetry* (ed. I.H. Rizvi, 1988); *Poetry Intercontinental* (ed. Prakash Joshi, 1988); *International Poetry* (ed. Teresinka Pereira, 1988); *Pan-Continental Premier Poets: The Tenth Biennial Anthology* (eds. Bohumila Falkowski et al., 1988); *The Crusading Icons* (ed. Laxmi Narayan Mahapatra, 1989); *The Trapped Word* (ed. Sailendra Narayan Tripathy, 1988); *Indian Poetry in English: Old and New* (ed. O.P. Bhatnagar and R.A. Joshi, 1989); *Snows to the Seas* (ed. M.A. Nare, 1989); *Contemporary Indian English Love Poetry* (ed. I.H. Rizvi, 1990); *World Poetry* (ed. Krishna Srinivas, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000); *Third Eye: An Anthology of Contemporary Indian English Poetry* (ed. Laxmi Narayan Mahapatra, 1991); *Summer's Treasures* (ed. Rosalie Avara, 1992); *International Poetry* (ed. Teresinka Pereira, 1991-92); *International Poets* (ed. Syed Ameeruddin, 1992); *World Poetry* (ed. Kim Young Sam, 1993); *World Poetry* (ed. Kim Joung Woong, 1994, 1995); *Antologia en Versos Do Movimento Poetico em Sao Paolo* (ed. Wilson de Oliveira Jasa, 1994); *Prophetic Voices* (ed. Ruth Wildes Schuler, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996); *Lydia Sigourney: An Anthology in Memoriam* (ed. M. Myers, 1995); *Harriet Spofford: An Anthology in Memoriam* (ed. M. Myers, 1996); *Paul Dunbar: An Anthology in Memoriam* (ed. M. Myers, 1997); *Richard Henry Wilde: An Anthology in Memoriam* (ed. M. Myers, 1997); *Poems:97: An Anthology* (ed. Ravi Nandan Sinha, 1997); *Moon 'n' Cuckoo's Nest* (eds. Stella Browning, and others, 1998), *The Shadows Undulate* (ed. Dejan Bogojevic, 1999); *Heaven:99: A Book of Poetry* (ed. Bidhan Datta); *Poetry Globe: 1999* (ed. Pradip Kumar Chaudhury, 1999); *The Art of Haiku: 2000* (ed. Gerald England, 2000); *Azami: The Year 2000* (ed. Patricia Neubauer, 2000); *The Acorn Book of Contemporary Haiku* (eds. Lucien Stryk and Kevin Bailey, 2000); *Poetry Bridge-in-Making Millennium: 2000 : An Anthology of Poems* (ed. Pronab Kumar Majumder, 2000); *Second Attempt* (ed. M.S. Venkata Ramaiah, 2000); *Poppies with Pride* (ed. Sandra Lunnin, 2000); *Indian Poets United* (ed. Mondal Bijoy Beg, 2000); *Heaven* (ed. Bidhan Datta, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006); *Through the Garden Gate* (ed. Sandra Lunnon, 2001); *The Language of Love* (ed. Sandra Lunnon, 2001); *Spread the Word* (ed. Sandra Lunnon, 2001); *Millennium Mood: 2001* (ed. C.L. Khatri, 2001); *The Road Between Mountains* (ed. Dejan Bogojevic, 2002); *Haiku: The Leaves are Back on the Tree: International Anthology* (ed. Zoe Savina, 2002); *We Remember You: Mrs Indira Gandhi, Mr Rajiv Gandhi* (ed. Baldev Mirza, 2003); *Above Treetops* (ed. Dejan Bogojevic, 2003); *Ich trauma deinen Rhythmus* (ed. Ingo Cesaro, 2003); *Continuity: Five Indian English Poets* (ed. R.A. Singh, 2003); *Purbodesh: An Asian Poets Anthology* (ed. Bidhan Datta, 2004, 2007); *10th Memorial Haiku Book* (ed. Yasuomi Koganei, 2004); *Das Gewicht Des Glucks* (ed. Ingo Cesaro, 2004); *VoicesNet Anthology, No.10* (2004); *For a World Peace: Selected Poems* (eds. Giovanni Campisi and Timothy B. Watson, 2005); *Paint the Sky with Stars* (eds. Michael Dave and Stephen Kuta, 2005); *Fire Pearls: Short Masterpieces of the Human Heart* (ed. M. Kei, 2006); *Elixir* (ed. Sanjay Singh Padm, 2006); *Busy Bee Book of Contemporary Indian English Poetry* (eds. P. Raja and Rita Nath Keshari, 2007); *Landfall* (eds. Denis M. Garrison and Michael McClintock, 2007); *Haiku Harvest: 2001-2006* (ed. Denis M. Garrison, 2007); *Veyilolugum Gudisaigal* (ed. M. Ramalingam, 2008); *Rainbow: True Colours of Life* (ed. Sanjay Singh Parihar 'Padm', 2008); *Indian Haiku* (ed. Angelee Deodhar, 2008); *Haiku Calendar* (ed. Boris Nazansky, 2008); *Streetlights: Poetry of Urban Life in Modern English Tanka* (ed. Michael McClintock, 2009); and *Brave New Wave: 21 Indian English Poets* (ed. K.V. Raghupathi, 2009).

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PUBLISHED PREFATORY NOTES/FOREWORDS/FRONT-NOTES/COMMENTS

1. *MY SILENCE*. Madras: Poets Press India, 1985

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

“I am also grateful to my poet-professor friend, Dr Lyle Glazier of Bennington, Vermont, whose advice and guidance changed the texture of a large number of poems included here.”

FOREWORD

Emerson has said: “It is not metres, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem—a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or animal it has an architecture of its own.” Denise Levertov is more explicit—“Intellect and sensuous instinct lead to syllable which has intrinsic meaning but has not rhythm. It is when emotion and feeling influence the operation of process that we are led to the phrase, the rhythmic, emotive grouping of syllables.” Conrad believed that we are in this life as in a dream, and the secret is to immerse oneself in the destructive element and let the deep sea keep you up. As such, we witness in modern poets their struggle to convert materials that are dumb and stammering in everydayness into eloquent media.

To the poet, the world is an extension of himself—his flesh, his blood, his bones. Poetical modernity is expressing its freedom of form, of structure, of imagery and idea. Twilight poets write of a fragile world, covered with mysticism and eerie shadows.

Dr Singh has chosen his own path—combining the riches of tradition with scintillating modernity. He is very helpful to the reader when he says:

‘The psychological and aesthetic tension of each poem, which is an independent experience shaped by an awareness wrapped in the real-fictional duality of the poet, rests on the bilateral relation between its personae and the readers, and I hold that as a creator, the poet should allow his readers to re-create the material according to their own intellectual potency, taste and sensibility and himself refrain from making any comments or suggestions on his poems. Even giving a title to the poem is to interfere with the readers’ freedom of imagination. As such the poems in this collection have no titles: there is only first-line table of contents.’

He startles us when he sings:

‘...I drink the infinite in her.’

‘The best poetry
is a woman
concrete, personal, delightful
greater than all’

Each night in the island of his little bed he enters, he senses:

‘Sex like octopus’

He sees the mountain as a green cemetery—hiding men and ages:

‘I wanted to touch a sun
vanished before my hands
became titan to reach
the horizon’

And to him a poem:

‘elusive like a butterfly
is the dynamics
of a culture...’

and

‘it incorporates multiplicity of modern man/fluid, mobile/multicultural/manipulating /matrix of tongues/and patterns of languages/into a stable whole /of self awareness.’

In his remarkable book, *Savitri: A Spiritual Epic*, Dr Singh writes: “Poets are always searching for words that sink deep into the living texture of a culture.” And, Dr Lyle Glazier of Bennington, Vermont, USA, has rightly said: “R.K. Singh writes with the directness of an overheard whisper, or a wind through trees, a ripple in a stream, or a cry in the street after dark.

1st January 1985

-- Krishna Srinivas

2. *MUSIC MUST SOUND*. Stencilled. Published by the poet, May 1990

PREFATORY NOTE

The manuscript for this collection was prepared soon after the appearance of *My Silence* in 1985 but it could not see the light despite promises by a couple of my poet-friends in Madras. In the mean time the poems like the poet have been getting old with every passing year, itching my memory, perhaps not without the awareness of very limited outlets for reaching the hands of readers.

Now I have pieced together some of the poems composed or published during 1971-1985, reshuffling the past and providing a relative view of my early creativity even though I know the physical appearance of the collection in itself is neither attractive nor impressive.

The poems continue to appear without a pattern and untitled though they are numbered for individual identification.

May 1990

--R.K.SINGH

3. *EVERY STONE DROP PEBBLE*. New Delhi: Bahri Publications, 1999

PREFACE

Poems in the collection range from experimental or avant garde to traditional haiku, showing varied references, mood, approaches: Zen, visual, minimalist, personal views and revelatory excitement, local and cultural adaptation of the Sino-Japanese schools, articulating the *sound* and *silence*. Here is not so much the seasonal feeling, external nature, or formulaic presentation but the *spirit*, the individual sense of *wonder* in the total surrounding. With varying lineation and punctuation, the line space, dash, ellipsis, and colon speak like words.

Since we see haiku as the “most international of forms”, each of us exploits the genre as a living medium which expresses our distinct sensibility in interaction with quotidian phenomena, merging the natural and human.

Our subjective reflections or intuitive responses to various human and non-human observations mirror the spirit that pervades our sense of *being* and sense of *reality*: we seek in our brief sensory encounters something beyond the words, that illumines the inner season. We express our inner awareness and share with each other those profound moments that link us despite distances and differences.

Each of us, in our own way, lives within to distinguish and devise what is objectively experienced in varying locales. The poetic air reverberates with diversity, subtlety, raw thoughts and feelings, humour, irony, rhythm, truth, suggestions, and at times an imaginative point of view, as we wrestle with moments to create haiku after haiku.

--CATHERINE MAIR, PATRICIA PRIME, R.K.SINGH

4. *THE RIVER RETURNS: A COLLECTION OF TANKA AND HAIKU*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 2006

PREFATORY NOTE

Though I have been writing short lyrical poems for over three decades and practicing haiku and tanka in English for over fifteen years, I could find my rhythm in miniature poems only recently.

Now I do not adhere to the 5-7-5 syllables, nor do I make any difference between haiku and senryu. I just practise haiku in different beats (3-5-3; 4-6-4; 5-7-5) or free-form haiku, and when possible, expand its lyrical content to a tanka in five lines without restricting myself to 5-7-5-7-7 rhythm.

As readers will bear me out, it is possible to convey so much within the 3- or 5-line span of the short-long-short or short-long-short-long-long flow of the haiku or tanka rhythm. It is also possible to elevate the quotidian experiences to the level of poetry, using the medium of haiku and tanka, provided one seeks to be visual or sensuous, or expresses natural concrete action or object, or experiences from ones whole being, and does not 'fake' poetic feelings or render fictitious or imaginative experiences.

In these selected tanka and haiku—at times providing sequences—I have tried to evoke the essence of the moment in its sensory details as selflessly as possible. Even as I appear to speak directly, the subjective and the objective tend to mix up, hopefully, without compromising the emotional content, passion, vigour, or freshness. Yet , if I sound different, it could be a matter of sensibility.

It is now ten years after the publication of *My Silence and Other Selected Poems: 1974-1994* that Prakash Book Depot brings out my new collection. I feel highly obliged to Prem Babu and Rahul ji for making my tanka and haiku poetry accessible to readers of Indian English Poetry.

June 16, 2006

--R.K. SINGH

5. *SEXLESS SOLITUDE AND OTHER POEMS*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 2009

FOREWORD

I was quite surprised when Professor R.K. Singh asked me to introduce his new book of poems, **Sexless Solitude And Other Poems**, to readers. Instantly I said no. The reason : I had edited, not long ago, a book of critical articles on his poetry. But my pleas didn't work with him. At last, I persuaded myself to do his bidding.

Well, critics of literature more than once have used De Quincey's conservative definition of literature i.e. the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, in support of their argument. The function of the first is to preach and that of the second, to move. But where to put the literature that doesn't like to do either? And, here is a poet who dislikes to preach and who abhors to move, any one. His aim, so it seems, is to make his reader think along with him, to be his co-traveller in the journey of his poetic life.

Well-read in the important literary classics of India, well-trained in the use of English language, well-versed in modern western thoughts, Dr. Singh articulates his perceptions, his experiences, in a very unconventional way. Not at all shy of using words associated with sex, he puts them to different uses in his poems. It makes purists of literature believe that the poet is a shameless hawker of sex in the street of literature. His poems, they think, have soiled the white house (not the White House) of literature. Such persons in fact suffer from agoraphobia. The poet reminds them:

“don't condemn me if I am not white”

The word '*white*' as used here is not to be taken literally. It has wider implications in the context of the poem. Asserts the poet again:

“I love Him through the bodies He made”

After all, poets are not a uniform-wearing brigade marching in one direction. They have no love for grooves, they have no reverence for authority. By adopting different literary strategies they attempt to clarify the world around them and also clarify their own attitude toward the world they are in.

A poet of modern sensibility, Dr. Singh has drawn inspiration from diverse literatures of the world, from the English-speaking to the non-English, such as Japan, France, Chile, Yugoslavia etc. Being a literary bastard (as most present-day writers are), he reacts strongly against groups that are reluctant to change themselves despite the changes (paradigm shift) brought about by technology. Illustrative of this fact is the poem “Holi”.

I didn't keep the fast
there's no Naw Ruz for me

there's no Holi either
I ceased to be a hindu

long ago christians too
doubted my faith and love

moslems are too rigid
to admit a secular

now alone I watch
the tragedy of colours:

I celebrate difference
and freedom of spirit

but they question my birth
call me a hypocrite

Here is the predicament of a modern man who faces medieval psyche in the democratic, technological, age. Despite the persona's embrace of broad liberal humanism he is not acceptable to any community or group of believers (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and others) because of their obsession with themselves. This kind of narrow loyalty negates all features of modernity and keeps them chained to obscurantism. (And obscurantism is nothing but saying no to the spirit of inquiry.) No group allows its secrets or property to be touched or violated by the new culture of science or liberal humanism. In a way, it is a sort of joint declaration of their utter naivety, of their religiosity, and of their provincialism. Put simply: they do not like to see themselves in the larger context of the world.

Under the poet's lens are all the sins that beset India: politicians who 'idolize criminals' and who 'ritually smuggle power/ to perpetuate wanton rut/of intellectual sodomy/ crying foul after checkmate' and gurus who 'can overcome /her migraines making love/lying on top of her partner/ and himself workshops/ with one, two, three devotees. (Note the new use of *workshops* as verb.)

This apart, the poet-professor is the only humanist in his university where technology and management reign supreme. Woe to a person who doesn't get infected by these mighty twin forces of our times. He does, and it gets amply reflected in the making of his poems.

Poetry, then, is the art of managing an idea, an experience, a perception with the help of essential words. The wild flow of words is an anathema to it. The 'spontaneous overflow'

definition of poetry should not work in the high days of technology. Even the great poet who defined it that way did not practice it in the making of his own poetic compositions. A look at the popular poems like 'The Solitary Reaper' and 'Daffodils' should convince a reader. Inept hands in our land have often used his definition in their defence. As a result, they have given us inferior poems.

Dr. Singh manages to tell his experience, bitter or sweet, mostly bitter, in minimum possible words. He would eliminate all the non-essentials from his composition. He would chiefly exploit, like Hemingway, the vigour of verb in his poems, and avoid the pomp and vanity of adjective altogether. This way of writing makes his poems far different from the poems we often come across in Indian English poetry magazines.

In contrast to many poets who peddle poor prose cut into lines of poetry, Dr. Singh's poems are sober, mature, and disciplined. Though written in free verse they are yet compact. Neither the words nor emotions go astray. No cliché exists there. Only the power of plain words on display.

In essence, his poetry is not for the soft-headed. It will scare the puritans and taunt the purists because the poet lifts the so-called unclean words of the street and gives them a new dignity. In the history of Indian English poetry, I guess, it has been attempted for the first time on such a scale. No doubt it has its dangers. But in the borderless world of today many buffers are at hand. And to the one who has chosen the uncommon path in style and language it acts as the air of spring that drives him to the house of his mate, every day, every hour.

I hope the new generation of readers, though lost in the hell of cyber world, will find time to go through the book and celebrate with the poet the freedom of spirit.

Jaipur, September 1, 2008

--I. K. Sharma

SOME COMMENTS

Dr R.K. Singh writes "transparent poems...deft and readable, with clean insight."

"We may safely enjoy much of his love poetry for their directness, and clarity of expression at times enhanced by images quite evocative..."

His "poetic personality is distinctly emergent through the theme or themes, finely modulated diction, sharply seized moods and other poetic devices so competently handled."

“...full of irony; satire against customs, religious practices and politics; pathos, sensuousness, eroticism....Small lines gush out like the leap of a fountain.”

“The poet sees the world as an extension of himself—his flesh and blood. It is this outlook on life which enables him to endow the most unpoetic subjects with some poetic quality.”

“Perhaps the most impressive characteristic of the poems is verbal economy. Singh does not grope for the “exact words” as some Indo English poets are known to do. His words flow naturally into emotional—and sometimes dramatic—structures.”

“An explosive talent, watchful, seeing everything, missing nothing, Dr Singh is known for his astonishing imagination, riot of images and extremely telling clarity.”

“Singh wields his English through this delicate and complex world of awareness and experience with absolute control, authority and originality, never witnessed before in Indian English poetry.”

“Poetry for R.K. Singh is a passion tamed to the tune of thoughts that flow gracefully through lines of implosive violence. He is an artist acutely sensitive to the world of beauty lacerated by pain that defines the limits of human existence.”

“Woman is the centre of Singh’s experience. Her various manifestations figure prominently in his poetry. No other Indian English poet has observed women so thoroughly, minutely and aesthetically with her divinity, belovedhood, wifehood, and even her penury leading to prostitution.”

“While reading his erotic poetry, one does notice the impact of poets like Donne and Shiv K. Kumar, on the one hand, and the Upanisads, on the other. But one doesn’t see anything being borrowed and breathed in his poetry. His erotic poetry is fresh, fragrant and fluorescent.”

“The imagery of R.K. Singh presents a queer blend of sensuousness and gloom as if drawn from the quizzical despair of the modern man and his predicament.”

“He is an unusual poet whose sensuous imagery and varied moods encompass his deeply emotional and haunting beautiful feelings.”

“R.K. Singh emerges as an illustrious poet whose poems, conspicuous for precision, economy, apt and evocative imagery, which is suggestive of Indian sensibility and ethos, and complete linguistic command, are pregnant with deep emotions and profound thoughts...”

“The serious endeavour of R.K. Singh is admirably confined to the class of form conscious readers who care for the exploration of the human mind and its finer sensibilities.”

“In poems of R.K. Singh contents grow rich with cumulative shades of symbols; we come across portraits in words, situations rendered in images; the poet only suggests, and surface hides a depth-structure.

In FLIGHT OF PHOENIX, the poet harmonizes the real with the ephemeral, the sensuous with sublime, the feeling with perception, and tries to transcend himself through the verbal medium of poetry.”

“R.K. Singh’s poetry appeals because he is able to write without taking recourse of mannerisms. His poems do not make too many demands on the reader but they speak to him and bring to him a sharpened awareness of reality.”

“...These are fine, reflective, meditative poems that are also shot through with shafts of light and insight. The form and balance of the structure he creates reflects his own interpretation of a personal inner reality.

“Some of the verses have an overriding sensuality that comes across powerfully, and others are gentle and understated. The poet has tried to acquire a very high quality both in form and content.”

“Both as an editor and as a critic, Dr R.K. Singh has rendered yeoman’s service to Indian English poets. With keen insight as a critic, he penetrates to the core of a poet’s work. He quotes profusely from the poets to present a vivid picture of their works. As an editor, he has played the much-needed role at the present stage of Indian English poetry by bringing to light the emerging poets of whom many are throttled to death by the non-publication of their reviews in the so called esteemed journals....”

“R.K.SINGH, widely published and anthologized in India and abroad, is a unique poet sharing an international sensibility in keeping with his ‘Baha’i mind’. Poetry is his service to humanity. He is perhaps the only Indian English poet who does not believe in giving titles to his poems because in his reckoning titles tell too much and interfere with the autonomy of the reader’s imagination.”

“Sex in his poetry is often taken very literally whereas I perceive a deeper undercurrent that leads it to super-conscious level and brings him close to D.H. Lawrence’s philosophy of life and blood.”

“Singh’s language has a gospel tinge, too, down-to-earth, yet mystical. It is obviously influenced by wide reading.”

“Singh’s most typical poems draw hard lessons and deliver them with verve and style. His tone is partly explained and vouched for by the poet’s own shedding of illusions. And the rhythmical sureness is not just a benefit of their rhetorical momentum – they are pleasingly clear. They seem to offer a “real people” thesis. As narrative they are of interest. Some invoke the unattainable by insisting on its unavailability.

Singh’s poetry is among the most sensuously embodied and imaginative writing to come out of India, and this collection is a reminder of how startling, original, and deeply relevant his poetry is. In *Sexless Solitude and Other Poems*, Singh brings us to the edge of civilization as we know it. How might the human spirit persist caught between its love of beauty, its acknowledgment of continuing injury and damage done, and the realization that a future may no longer be assured?

There is no better writer to confront such matters as R. K. Singh. In addition to his recognized achievements as teacher, critic and reviewer, Singh is also acknowledged as one of India’s foremost poets. As inventive as anything he has written, *Sexless Solitude and Other Poems* is an essential work speaking out for love, sensuality and the meaning of life.”

“The title may perhaps create an impression of painful loneliness, in mind and body. R K Singh is a daring experimenter. He has explored the human (more of men’s) mind in the area of sexual thoughts which are enjoyed as gossips or fantasies or vulgar jokes in small groups but never admitted openly. The intellectual and creative poet in him has not stopped at the cross level in which men often enjoy their sexual thoughts.

... It is such a truthful boldness of expression that sets apart R K Singh from many others. He has no fears. He is incisive in searching and exploring and bold in expressions. He is also blessed with sweetness of the language.”

“With the weapons of irony and satire, award-winning poet attacks worn-out traditions and corruption wherever he finds. Symbols are individual and graceful. R.K. Singh is the voice in the English poetry of India that cannot be ignored also because he is prolific, sincere and at the same time he is cosmopolitan in his style, themes and emotions.”

“The poetry herein shows a complete understanding of the English language and its foibles carefully selected for use in poetry that could be understood by a wide audience. In my opinion, it is aimed at the educated regardless of their native tongue who have a firm grasp of the Western World and international wit in general.”

"R.K. Singh's work is a rare find, as an avid reader, when I come upon something unique, fresh and completely engulfing as his body of various works, I am thrilled and it's like coming upon a banquet, I almost drool in anticipation of reading his work, and savoring each piece in all its delicious wonder."

"Most of the poems ...are vignettes of a dozen or so lines, as you'd expect from this poet, but their short length is very often their strength. In their brevity lies their force. You cannot read more than a few lines of R K Singh before you start squirming in your seat wondering when the next punch to your solar plexus, or even lower down, is going to come.

Singh writes about many things; often of what he sees on a day to day basis in the streets of an Indian city. Sometimes he comes across as a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Frustration with life, existence, meaning, dirt, smell, sex, God, and consequently the driving need to explore these themes is never far away....

What's really behind R K Singh's unceasing output of verse? is a question I have asked myself more than once. Why does he strive so long and hard? Is there here an eternal search for some universal truth? Or is it simply anger at the way the world, and India, is?"

"It's a hard course to conquer it (fear of future). It's a spirit thing. It tastes bitter. However, the body can hardly change or hold by spirit. It must be go wither away. Then, practice (of) Buddhist teachings is needed. When he accomplishes this practice, we call he is the Buddha. A Buddha is sexless as Dr. R.K. Singh describes in his poem "Sexless Solitude"... It's a higher condition. He walks away from "Fear" to "Sexless Solitude" and completes the practice of Buddhist teachings. He is not a vulgar, but a Buddha, a fairy, or in short, a god."

"Reading your poems made me think of someone who has lived every word he has written. There is no way to write as clear headed as you do without knowing where you have been and where you are going. A particular favorite was "I want to sleep" because it honestly details what crosses one's mind when insomnia strikes. It could have been a frightening vision in lesser hands. In yours it reads like a mantra."

“Reading “Sexless Solitude” is very much like experiencing a sleepless night.

I have a feeling of hovering, invisible, over the pillow where the poet’s soul is tossing to and fro, embarked on a nightly train of thoughts which rolls through the whole range of inner landscapes from the acuity of wakefulness down to the hazy flow of next-to-dream states of mind, between longed-for quietness and the never-ceasing stimuli from the surrounding world.

Even though “my ordeals are mine alone/ In the valley of self” (Valley of Self), these ordeals, once they have been observed and portrayed, become ours to accept in recognizement or repress out of fear to see. “

“Few poets in the world today can write ‘erotic poetry’ with the élan that he does. Very basic sexual encounters take on identities that almost result in sanctifying sex. There are poems of disillusionment , despair, frustration and fury; there are poems of love for life in the spiritual, mental and physical form and there are cries for a release from life and living.”

“R.K.Singh is like Tiresias, the experiencer and the onlooker of the malady of the modern world. His impotent rage against the sterility of the modern man reverberates eloquently throughout the volume. The poet uses the technique of the ‘internal monologue’ and other sensational devices to arouse the jaded consciousness of contemporary man.”

“The sheer range and control of his prose and poetry is impressive, as is his scholarship, creative energy and inventiveness.”

“Singh’s poetic capability lends itself more effectively, I feel, to tanka rather than haiku....Singh’s tanka are concerned with a number of recurrent themes – with continuity; with the mysterious quality of the natural world and the moments of revelation that sometimes come to those who appear to live on the edge of that world, in the suburbs and small towns; with notions of identity—as an isolated individual with a shifting sense of self, and as a member of the larger community concerned with academia, his colleagues, politics and social policies.”

“Singh is capable of creating pure poetry where nature is left to itself but observed from a close angle. It is not a glance but a gaze.”

“Probably, the shift in poetic form, from long poems to haiku and tanka, must have happened to the poet naturally, because even in his long poems the poet ‘articulates his feelings and thoughts in measured syllables, eschewing unnecessary flamboyance of language or flights of fancy.’ It is

this poetic talent which makes Singh a prolific writer of haiku and tanka.”

“His use of language is not accidental, but rather that of a wordsmith of large talent and definite intent.”

“The poet Singh, like the prophet Jeremiah, shows a deep feeling for nature, and perhaps for everybody.”

“It is in that meeting point of vision, skill, knowledge, and heart that R.K.Singh’s poetry lives.”

“By exploring the work of R.K. Singh we may not only come to understand something of the world of this unique poet but may also come to discover more secrets about ourselves and the world in which we live and have our being.”

(For more critical observations, one may like to refer to *New Indian English Poetry: An Alternative Voice: R.K.Singh* (ed: I.K. Sharma), Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2004, and visit the poet’s blog: <http://rksinghpoet.blogspot.com>).

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